THE
COMING
OF THE LORD
By JAMES H. SNOWDEN

A. C. Roush

THE COMING OF THE LORD:

WILL IT BE PREMILLENNIAL?

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THE COMING OF THE LORD:

WILL IT BE PREMILLENNIAL?

BY

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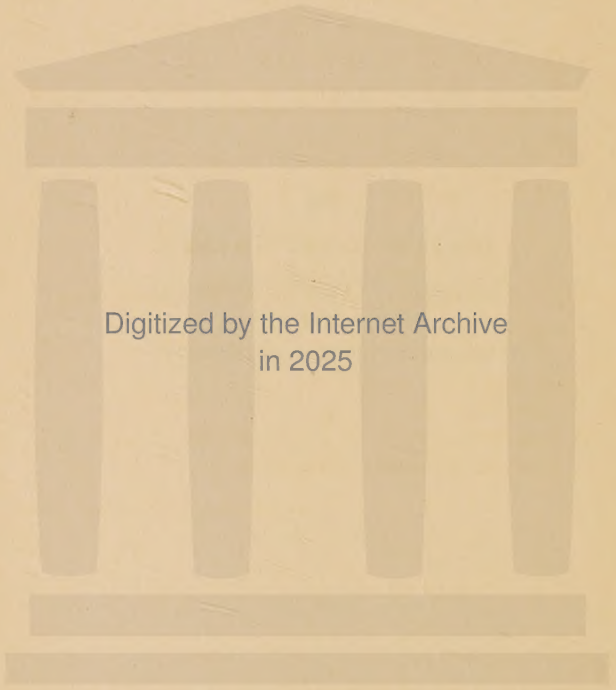
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Oh, where are kings and empires now,
Of old that went and came?
But, Lord, thy church is praying yet,
A thousand years the same.

We mark her goodly battlements,
And her foundations strong;
We hear within the solemn voice
Of her unending song.

For not like kingdoms of the world
Thy holy church, O God!
Though earthquake shocks are threatening her,
And tempests are abroad;

Unshaken as eternal hills,
Immovable she stands,
A mountain that shall fill the earth,
A house not made with hands.

— *Arthur Cleveland Coxe*

PREFACE

This book rests on the accepted basis of the substantial historicity and trustworthiness of the Scriptures, and the discussion of the historical and critical problems involved in this basis is excluded from its pages as belonging to another specialized field of study. The conclusions of such thorough and impartial critical scholars as Driver in his *Introduction to the Old Testament* and Moffatt in his *Introduction to the New Testament* sustain this basis, and only very radical views would undermine the foundation and destroy the whole reasoning and value of the book. The Jewish apocalyptic and eschatological elements in the New Testament are the point where criticism specially bears upon our subject, but a considerably larger infusion of this coloring into New Testament teaching than is allowed for in this book would not seriously impair or greatly modify its general position. Christ and his apostles necessarily clothed their utterances in the language and thought-forms of their day, but the substance of their teaching is disclosed clearly enough through this more or less transparent drapery.

Amidst all the complications and ramifications of our subject the one central point this book holds in view and contends for is that the kingdom of God is now being established and will reach its full develop-

ment in the world under the present ministration of the gospel and agency of the Holy Spirit, and will be followed by the final advent of Christ and the eternal state; and the view it opposes reverses this order and holds that Christ must first come in judgment and power before this work can be achieved.

"You do not belong to the communion of the Christian church; we cannot acknowledge you as brethren!" said Luther to Zwingle, as he refused to shake hands with him at the conclusion of the futile conference at Marburg in 1529. "One or the other of us," he said, "must be a minister of Satan": a scene and a saying that caused the gentle Zwingle to burst into tears. We are fallen on happier times when amidst all our differences as Christians we can maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Some of the author's intimate friends hold the view opposed in these pages, but this difference, which is of minor importance in comparison with the fundamental truths held in common, has never marred our mutual respect and fellowship; and it is in this spirit that this book has been written and is sent out. We may differ in unessential details while we are yet of one faith in "looking for that blessed hope and appearing of the glory of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ."

The opportunity of a second printing has permitted the author to make a number of corrections, revisions, and additions in the text of the book.

J. H. S.

Pittsburgh, Pa.

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THE COMING OF THE LORD:

WILL IT BE PREMILLENNIAL?

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

We are living between two visits of Jesus Christ to this world. On his first visit he was born into our human world as a babe, without any of the pageantry and pomp that then attended the birth of an emperor or king, and quietly grew into maturity and then unostentatiously entered upon his public ministry, which was confined to a small and obscure corner of the world and quickly ran its brief course and ended ignominiously upon a cross. He rose again in his resurrection, which declared him with power to be the Son of God, and after a brief interval ascended to his Father, leaving his wondering disciples gazing after him in the sky. In his second visit he will come in the glory of his Father with the holy angels. As his first coming filled the Old Testament with the dawn of the hope of the promised Messiah, so his second coming is the sunrise of hope in the New Testament. This blessed hope of his return overarches the lengthening day in which we live and work and is the golden link that binds his first with his second coming.

1. *The Fact of Christ's Coming.* It is well in beginning this study to emphasize the point of agreement amidst all the diverse views held by Christian believers on the subject of the second coming of Christ. Faith in this future event is precious to all such believers, and this common hope rises above and overshadows all diversities of belief as to the time and mode of its fulfillment, as a mountain overshadows all the little hills lying around its feet.

The Scripture teaching on the fact of the second advent is abundant and familiar and only a few passages need be adduced in this connection. Jesus himself plainly declared that he would return to this world in a final advent. Twice in his great eschatological discourse recorded in Matthew 24–25 he did this: "and they shall see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send forth his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (24:30–31). "But when the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the angels with him, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all the nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats" (25:31–32). At the ascension of Jesus two men in white apparel said to the upward gazing disciples, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye looking into heaven? this Jesus, who was received up from you into heaven, shall so come in like

manner as ye beheld him going into heaven" (Acts 1:11). In Paul's First Epistle to the Thessalonians, which was the first book of the New Testament to be written, he declared, "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God" (4:16). And in the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians he wrote more fully "touching the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto him" (1:7, 10; 2:1–4). The author of Hebrews says that "so Christ also, having been once offered to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time, apart from sin, to them that wait for him, unto salvation" (9:28). And in Revelation we read, "Behold, he cometh with the clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they that pierced him; and all the tribes of the earth shall mourn over him" (1:7).

There is general agreement among Christian believers in accepting the fact of Christ's coming, though there is diversity of view as to its time and mode. Some interpreters take all these declarations in the literal sense that Christ will come in bodily form in the clouds in glory with the angels so that all the people on the earth shall see him with their eyes; and others take the same language in a figurative and spiritual sense, very much as we now interpret in a spiritual sense the equally materialistic descriptions of Christ's first coming in the Old Testament. But the point now before us is that practically all students of and believers in the Bible accept the fact of Christ's return in some

sense to this world in glory. This is "that blessed hope" which has been cherished through all the Christian centuries and which gives final value to the reign of Christ and kingdom of God. Amidst all our differences we are to hold on to this central fact and follow this hope as a star that leads us on and lifts us up during our earthly pilgrimage and service.

2. *The Two Views of Christ's Coming: the Postmillennial and the Premillennial.* At this point there emerges the divergence known as the postmillennial and the premillennial views. Both of these theories hold that there is to be a period of prevailing righteousness and reign of Christ in the world, commonly known as the millennium. This word is not found in the Bible, but is from the Latin word for a thousand years, the period in the vision in Rev. 20: 1–7 during which the souls of martyrs and confessors reign with Christ. The terms "premillennial" and "postmillennial" are unfortunate and misleading as they depend upon the word "millennium," which refers to a highly figurative passage and greatly disputed subject; but they have become so established in usage that they cannot well be dispensed with or replaced by others. The vital point of difference between the two theories is that postmillenarianism holds that the world will be converted to Christianity before Christ comes in his final advent, and premillenarianism reverses this order and holds that Christ must come before the world is converted. In the one case, the conversion of the world causes or prepares the way for the coming of

Christ, and in the other case the coming of Christ causes the conversion of the world. Because of the misleading reference of the terms, some scholars refuse to take sides on this question, but they will nearly always be found on the one or the other side of this main point. Any one who believes that the kingdom of God is gradually to be extended until it practically fills the world and will then issue in the eternal state is, in effect, a postmillenarian, however much he may dislike the name. It should be understood that in this discussion the phrase "second coming of Christ" refers to his final advent and does not exclude his other intermediate comings, and that it does not predetermine the nature of his final coming, whether it is to be literal or figurative, material or spiritual.

The postmillennial view is briefly as follows. The kingdom of God is now in existence and has been from the beginning of the world, but Christ came to reveal it more clearly and extend it over the world. This process is now going on as a slow growth, and the means by which it is being carried on are the preaching and ordinances of the gospel together with all the means of grace and agencies of good as they are energized by the Holy Spirit, who is immanent in the world. This process is to go forward until the world is practically Christianized, and this state and period of the world, which may or may not be referred to in the thousand years of Rev. 20: 1–7, is commonly known as the millennium. Evil will not be wholly eradicated from the world even at the height of the

millennium, though Satan will be restrained, and at the end of this period there will be an outbreak of wickedness. Then will follow the final coming of Christ, which will be attended with the general resurrection and judgment, issuing in the eternal state.

The premillennial view is more complicated and is also attended with greater diversity of view among its advocates. Its general course runs as follows. The kingdom of God is not yet in existence in the world and will not be initiated until Christ comes. The present dispensation of the gospel is not expected or intended to convert the world to Christianity, but is only designed to preach the gospel as a witness to the nations and thus warn them of and make them justly subject to judgment and also to gather out of them God's elect or bride. The world is now growing and will continue to grow worse and worse during this dispensation until Christ comes. This coming is always imminent and may happen at any moment, and a chief duty of the Christian life is to "watch" for it. The coming itself is usually described as a complicated process. First Christ will come (some say secretly) and raise the righteous dead ("the first resurrection") and transform the living saints and catch them all up to meet him in the air. This is designated as "the rapture." Following the rapture there will be a period of tribulation during which God will pour out his judgments on the wicked, and especially upon apostate Israel so as to convert them and restore them to their own land. This brief period is known as "the tribula-

tion." In the meantime Christ and his saints are supposed to be up in the air hovering over the earth, and at the end of "the tribulation" he and they will return to the earth, and this return is called "the revelation." Christ will then bind Satan and cast him into the abyss and overthrow wickedness on the earth, set up his kingdom with Jerusalem as its splendid capital, the Jews will be gathered in Palestine and the ancient sacrifices will be restored in Jerusalem, and Christ together with the resurrected saints will rule for a thousand years over a worldwide kingdom of holiness. This millennium will be succeeded by a short but violent outbreak of wickedness, and then the wicked dead shall be raised up ("the second resurrection") and judged. This will be the end of the world, though many millenarians hold that this earth will be transformed into the eternal dwelling place of the righteous, and some even hold that generations of the righteous will continue to be propagated on this earth forever.

Not all millenarians hold to all of these details, but they generally hold these and other complications. The following outline of the doctrine is taken from *Jesus Is Coming,* by W. E. Blackstone, Chapter V:

"Millennium (Latin) is the same as Chiliad (Greek), and both mean a thousand years. Both terms stand for the doctrine of a future era of righteous government upon the earth, to last a thousand years.

"Jewish writers throughout the Talmud hold that this Millennium will be chiefly characterized by the de-

liverance of the Jews from all their enemies, recovery of Palestine and the literal reign of their Messiah in unequaled splendor therein.

"Premillennial Christians hold much in common with the Jews, but also that our Lord Jesus Christ is the Messiah; that he is to return to the earth and overthrow Satan, all ungodly government and lawlessness, and especially establish a kingdom of righteousness, having the church, with himself as sovereign, Jerusalem as the capital, regathered and converted Israel as the center, and all nations included in a universal, worldwide kingdom of pure and blessed government." For the "rapture," "tribulation" and "revelation," see Chapter IX. The book is also supplied, as such books commonly are, with diagrams in which these periods and events are all figured off in lines and circles.

These two streams of interpretation have been in the Christian church from the beginning and are likely to persist in the future. Both views are loyal to Christ and his second coming, and neither can justly claim to be superior to the other in this respect. They both have been held by able scholars and eminent ministers and faithful followers of our Lord Jesus Christ. Believing in the same Christ and holding the same Bible in their hands, cherishing the same hope of his coming, they yet differ with equal sincerity at this point. This is one of the many instances in which Christian believers and students reach divergences in doctrine where they must agree to disagree and should do this, not in

any spirit of impatience and acerbity, much less with any charges or insinuations of unfaithfulness, but with the fullest mutual confidence and Christian fellowship. It is in this spirit, we trust, that these pages are written. Such a disposition, however, is quite consistent with what is felt, on both sides, to be a vigorous defense of truth and refutation of error.

3. *Importance of the Subject.* Since both of these theories are held by evangelical Christians, why consider the matter and stir up this old controversy? Several things may be said on this point.

(1) There are two extremes on this subject which are to be avoided. One is the view that the matter is of no importance, the difference relating only to a single syllable, "pre" and "post," "before" and "after" an event concerning which no one knows the time when it may occur. Is not such a matter altogether too trivial to engage us in controversy? But a single syllable may be the pivot on which turns a large issue, as the divinity of Christ once trembled on a single Greek letter, and that the smallest one in the alphabet. This question relates to the future course of Christianity and fate of the world, and so large a matter cannot be unimportant. It may not be vital to Christian faith and life as many do hold this faith and live this life without holding any definite view on this subject. Yet it is a question of great interest and cannot be without its proper consequences.

The other extreme is that which makes the second coming of Christ the central and all-absorbing doctrine

of the Scriptures of both the Old and the New Testaments. One with an obsession on this subject can see some aspect or gleam of it in every part of the Bible, as the school of Baur, with his "tendency theory" that there are two parties opposing each other in the New Testament, that of Peter and that of Paul, could find some trace of this antagonism in almost every verse of the entire book. The zeal which finds the millennial hope in every part of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation next exalts it into a supreme duty and devotion that must dominate all life. Excess of zeal in any field easily runs into fanaticism, and especially is this true in this field. These extremes are to be avoided and there is a golden mean of truth and sobriety which we are to find and follow.

(2) Millenarianism is not a theory which can be confined within narrow limits, but is a principle that sends its roots under and its branches through all other doctrines of Christian faith and duty. It is a pervasive spirit that insinuates itself everywhere. "Premillennialism," says Dr. David Brown, "is no barren speculation — useless though true, and innocuous though false. It is a school of Scripture interpretation; it impinges upon and affects some of the most commanding points of the Christian faith; and, when suffered to work its unimpeded way, it stops not till it has pervaded with its own genius the entire system of one's theology, and the whole tone of his spiritual character, constructing, I had almost said, a world of its own; so that, holding the same faith, and cherishing the same

fundamental hopes as other Christians, he yet sees things through a medium of his own, and finds everything instinct with the life which this doctrine has generated within him." [1] In our judgment millenarianism drives a dislocating plowshare through the Bible from beginning to end. It is therefore of great importance that we subject these contending theories to the most careful critical investigation and seek to determine where the truth lies. This work, often as it has been done, must be done over and over again and each generation must think this thing through for itself.

(3) The practical consequences of millenarianism are positive and serious. It disturbed the very first Christian church into which it was introduced and created an excitement which Paul hastened to allay and correct (I Thess. 4: 13–18; II Thess. 2: 1–4). It appears to have a peculiar affinity with people of emotional temperament and puts a fever in their blood. At times it has been attended with grave abuses. This aspect of the subject will come up for later consideration.

For these reasons we cannot leave this old controversy alone, for it will not leave us alone. Premillenarianism has an aggressive spirit and policy, as it has a right to have. It organizes itself into conventions and meetings, issues platforms and proclamations, gratuitously distributes books and literature advocating it, flooding our theological seminaries with them, appears to be generously subsidized, holds "prophetic conferences," founds "Bible Schools" to

[1] *Second Advent,* pp. 6–7.

teach it, and thus in many ways carries on an active propaganda. Churches and denominations have been founded on this doctrine. We have never heard of postmillenarians doing any of these things. Premillenarianism pushes itself on the church. We are not complaining at this, for these brethren think it is their duty to do so, but other brethren think it is their duty to oppose a doctrine which they cannot regard as a harmless error.

CHAPTER II

HISTORY OF THE MILLENNIAL HOPE

THE whole subject of the millennial hope is rooted down in history, running back through the Scriptures and out into the pagan world, and some knowledge of this is necessary for an understanding of our study. Our present purpose and space permit only a slight sketch of the matter.[1]

1. *In the Pagan World.* The hope of a golden age has always and everywhere been entertained in the pagan world. Sometimes this age has been located in the past, but frequently it has been painted on the sky of the future. Ancient mythology in Egypt, Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome depicted tremendous conflicts between the gods of good and evil, often represented as monsters of fearful appearance and power, out of

[1] A concise history of it will be found in *The Millennial Hope,* by Shirley Jackson Case. See also Harnack, *History of Dogma,* vol. I, and his article on "Millennium" in *The Encyclopædia Britannica,* Schaff's *History of the Christian Church,* vol. II. pp. 613–620, and W. Adams Brown's article on "Millennium" in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible.* For a history of the millennial hope from the orthodox Jewish point of view, see *The Messiah Idea in Jewish History,* by Julius H. Greenstone, Ph.D. A specially valuable article on the "Origin and History of Premillenarianism," by Dr. C. A. Briggs, will be found in the *Lutheran Quarterly,* for April, 1879.

which usually emerged a victory for good and a golden period of peace and prosperity. Cosmic powers struggle for mastery in whose grip puny man is impotent. "There is a prevalent tendency," says Case, "to trust almost exclusively in special supernatural intervention for the hope of deliverance from evil. Even when the hope seems on the point of realization under some beneficent ruler, he is given supernatural credentials as a means of guaranteeing his validity. Where direct supernatural aid is rejected, reliance is placed upon the arbitrary workings of a superior cosmic process, and thus again the significance of the human struggle is virtually denied." [2]

2. *In the Old Testament.* This hope in the Old Testament was embodied in the Messiah whose coming filled the whole field of Jewish prophecy with increasing splendor. It grew into its clearest vision in the prophets who predicted judgment upon the enemies of Israel and a coming kingdom of earthly glory. After the exile especially this vision took the form of restored Israel established in their own land with Jerusalem as the magnificent capital and mistress of the world. All nations were to flow unto Zion, nature would be prolific, the wilderness would blossom as the rose and the mountains drip with wine and honey, wild beasts would grow tame, there would be nothing to hurt or destroy in all God's holy mountain, the Spirit would be poured out upon all flesh, and the ransomed of the Lord would return to Zion with songs and ever-

[2] *The Millennial Hope,* p. 47.

lasting joy upon their heads. The feasts and sacrifices were to be restored in Jerusalem and from all the ends of the earth all people were to come every Sabbath "to worship before me, saith the Lord" (Isa. 66: 20–23).

In Daniel the hope took the form of a series of apocalyptic visions in which fearful beasts representing the great world-empires that were the oppressors of Israel were destroyed, and "one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven" and "there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, and nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed" (7: 13–14).

These representations have been variously interpreted in ancient and modern times by both Hebrew and Christian expounders.[3] Many of the ancient rabbis were literalists indulging "in dreams of the marvelous fertility of the soil of Palestine in the Messianic time," and others took more sober views. "Samuel the Babylonian, of the third century, in opposition to the Messianic visionaries of his time, declared: 'The Messianic age differs from the present in nothing except that Israel will throw off the yoke of the nations and regain its political independence.'" After the failure of these pictorial representations to be literally realized Jewish interpreters began to spiritualize them. "Accordingly," says Maimonides, "Isaiah's picture

[3] For an account of Jewish interpretations see *Jewish Theology*, by Dr. K. Kohler, Chapter LIII, "The Messianic Hope."

of the living together of lamb and wolf cannot be taken literally, nor any of the Haggadic sayings with reference to the Messianic time." "Traditional Judaism" still persists "in its belief in a personal Messiah who would restore the Temple and its service," but "Reform Judaism has accepted the belief that Israel, the suffering Messiah of the centuries, shall at the end of days become the triumphant Messiah of the nations," "accentuating all the more strongly Israel's hope for a Messianic age, a time of universal knowledge of God and love of man, so intimately interwoven with the religious mission of the Jewish people." [4]

Among Christian interpreters postmillenarians spiritualize these material and political and sacrificial representations and find their fulfillment in the spread and final triumph of Christianity in connection with the first coming of Christ. Premillenarians, on the other hand, take them in a literal sense, Jewish temple, sacrifices and all, and then hoist them clear over the first into the second coming of Christ. Jewish interpreters, whether of the traditional or reform school, know nothing of a second coming of the Messiah in the old Testament, postmillenarians find in it few allusions to the final end of all things, but premillenarians see, as one of their writers declares, "the Old Testament saturated with Second Coming prophecies," and another

[4] Kohler, *Jewish Theology*, pp. 385, 386, 389. Greenstone, in *The Messiah Idea*, p. 279, makes the surprising statement that the belief in a personal Messiah "is the Messianic hope of most Jews of to-day."

writer declares "that each and every verse in twenty-five makes direct or indirect reference to" it.

3. *In the New Testament.* In the New Testament the millennial hope fills the field of the future, and the forms it assumes and the problems connected with it will be considered in the body of this book.

4. *The Subsequent History of the Hope.* The question as to whether the millennium or period of prevailing righteousness and dominant reign of Christ in the world precedes or follows his second coming became a burning question in the early church and has continued to this day; and connected with this is the question of the imminence of Christ's coming. Diversity of view on this latter point arose in the very beginning of Christian history. Paul in his earliest letters (First and Second Thessalonians) expected to be alive when Christ came, declaring that after the resurrection of "the dead in Christ," "then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air." But in one of his last epistles, written when in captivity in Rome, he expected to die, hoping that "Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether by life, or by death," and "having the desire to depart and be with Christ; for it is very far better" (Phil. 1:20, 23). The early Christians generally expected the return of Christ in their day to establish his kingdom by an exercise of cosmic power.

The church Fathers, Barnabas, Papias, Justin Martyr, and Irenaeus, all in the second century, and

Tertullian in the beginning of the third century, held to the millenarian coming of Christ in their day.[5] Opposition to this view, however, began to assert itself at an early date, and as time rolled on and receded farther from the departure of Christ, and especially when the Roman Empire ceased to persecute Christians and itself became formally Christian, the hope of the early return of Christ began to die out and the postmillenarian view began to gain ground.

Montanism, founded by Montanus in the second century, was largely a "gloomy and fanatical hyper-Christianity," and one of its "essential and prominent traits was a visionary millenarianism, founded indeed on the Apocalypse and on the apostolic expectation of the speedy return of Christ, but giving it extravagant weight and a materialistic coloring."[6] "By the bishops of Asia Minor, who felt their authority threatened, one or more synods were held soon after 160, which have the distinction of being the earliest synods of church history, and in which Montanism was condemned."[7] As this sentence of condemnation has never been lifted the doctrine may be said officially to bear the brand of heresy to this day.

Origen in the first half of the third century was the first to raise an influential voice against the premillenarian view. He interpreted the millennial imagery of

[5] Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. II, pp. 614–620, and Harnack, *History of Dogma*, vol. I, pp. 167–169.

[6] Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. II, pp. 417, 424.

[7] Walker, *A History of the Christian Church*, p. 59. See also Harnack, Article "Montanism" in *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

the Bible in a figurative sense and thus adopted a principle of interpretation which has been followed ever since, though he also introduced a method of "allegorizing" Scripture which has long since been discarded.

"Looking over the church of the third century," writes Rev. Dr. C. A. Briggs, "we find chiliasm in a few eminent men of the first half century, all influenced by extra-biblical traditions from Asia Minor; but they made it prominent only to insure its overthrow — for the mass of writers as well as churches, speaking through their local assemblies, bishops, and patriarchs, either show an entirely different conception of eschatology, or else, as in the great churches of Rome, Alexandria, and Asia Minor, they condemned the heresy; so that before the first Ecumenical Council of Nice, chiliasm had been virtually suppressed in all parts of the Christian church, and no one of that most august assembly of Christendom from all parts of the church, has ever, so far as we know, been charged with the slightest taint of millenarianism."[8] Dr. Briggs also points out that the early creeds "seem most effectually to exclude premillenarian views," the Apostles' Creed declaring, "From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead," which article is then taken up into the Nicene Creed without change, the Council of Constantinople adding the clause "of whose kingdom there will be no end." So also the Athanasian Creed adds to the Nicene, "At whose coming all men shall rise

[8] *The Lutheran Quarterly*, April, 1879, pp. 236–237, 239.

again with their bodies and shall give account for their own works, and they that have done good shall go into life everlasting, and they that have done evil into everlasting fire." These four great historic creeds of the early church thus make the resurrection of the righteous simultaneous with the resurrection of the wicked and thereby exclude premillenarianism.

The next and most powerful ancient opponent of millenarianism was Augustine. "During the fourth century," says Case, "Christianity made such rapid progress that it became the legal religion of the Roman Empire, thus making it possible for Augustine in the first quarter of the fifth century to write his famous treatise describing the church as the city of God on earth. The millennium was now no longer a desideratum; it was already a realization. Working from this point of view, Augustine lays the ghost of millenarianism so effectively that for centuries the subject is practically ignored." [9]

As the early historic creeds of the church were postmillenarian, so also are the later Protestant creeds. The Augsburg Confession affirms one general resurrection and judgment and expressly condemns the "Jewish opinion" that "before the resurrection of the dead the godly shall occupy the kingdom of the world" (Article XVII). The Westminster Confession declares: "God hath appointed a day, wherein he will judge the world in righteousness by Jesus Christ, to whom all power and judgment is given of the Father.

[9] *The Millennial Hope*, p. 179.

In which day, not only the apostate angels shall be judged; but likewise all persons, that have lived upon earth, shall appear before the tribunal of Christ, to give account of their thoughts, words, and deeds; and to receive according to what they have done in the body, whether good or evil" (Chapter XXXIII). Other Protestant creeds, in so far as they touch on this subject, speak in the same general terms, which at least imply the exclusion of premillenarianism.[10]

The year 1000 A. D. was attended with a revival of millenarianism as it was believed by many that the thousand years spoken of in Revelation was fulfilled and that the end of the world was at hand. Since that time there have been hundreds of instances in which there was a recrudescence of this doctrine, often attended with excitement and the fixing of a definite date for the return of Christ. The Bohemian Militz, a forerunner of Huss, fixed the end of the world as falling between 1365 and 1367. The reformers of Germany and Switzerland saw in the Roman Church and the Pope the "antichrist" and "man of sin" and "beast" and "scarlet woman" of Scripture which the early Christians in the days of Roman persecution had interpreted as the Roman Empire and the Emperor. A crude form of millenarianism arose in the sixteenth century in the fanatical movement of the Anabaptists. In the seventeenth century the German scholar Alsted fixed on 1694 as the inauguration of the millennium. In this same century the Fifth Mon-

[10] See Schaff's *The Creeds of Christendom* for these creeds.

archy Movement arose in England and antagonized Cromwell. In the eighteenth century a millenarian movement under the leadership of a girl gained headway in Germany and fixed on the year 1730 as the time of the second advent. At the close of the eighteenth century the French Revolution gave a fresh impulse to millenarian speculation and hope.

The nineteenth century was specially prolific in millenarian movements and announcements. Edward Irving, a Scotch Presbyterian, became a popular preacher in London in 1823 and had a considerable following, fixing on 1864 as the date of Christ's return. Rev. Dr. John Cumming was another Scotch preacher who became a London celebrity and indulged in impassioned prophesyings. Some of the dates announced for the return of Christ in the nineteenth century were 1835, 1838, 1839, 1843, 1844, 1866, 1867, 1870, and 1873. These dates are usually determined by an interpretation of "the signs of the times" and a manipulation of the various prophetical numbers found in the Bible, such as the "seven times" of Lev. 26: 18, the "seventy weeks," the "seven weeks," the "threescore and two weeks," the "one week," the "time, times, and a half" of Daniel, and the "five months," the "forty and two months," and the "thousand years" of Revelation. By turning the days of these weeks and months into years and adding, subtracting and otherwise manipulating them at will, any number can be brought out that suits the theory or desire or fancy of the computer. This calculation has gone on

for centuries and still persists in the face of all its failure and folly. Such calculators with Daniel and the almanac in their hands frequently announced the first coming of the Messiah. Kohler gives an account of these "would-be deliverers" of "the people of Israel," "who appeared from time to time to delude their hopes," and he quotes one of the Jewish sages who rebuked them as saying, "May the curse of heaven fall upon those who calculate the date of the advent of the Messiah and thus create political and social unrest among the people!" [11]

Several millenarian leaders have appeared who have founded churches or organizations which are still in existence. One of the earliest of these was Ann Lee, who came from England to this country in 1774, and her followers are the Shakers, who now number about 1700. They believe that the second coming of Christ is past and that they constitute the true church. The Plymouth Brethren arose at Plymouth in England about 1827, and they now have four branches in this country with 6,600 communicants. They look for the personal premillennial coming of Christ. William Miller, a converted deist, began to lecture in New York State in 1831 and fixed the date of Christ's advent in 1843. His followers, known as "Millerites," were thrown into great excitement and put on white robes in which to meet Christ as this date approached. When it came and passed Miller wrote a letter acknowledging his "error" and announced the next year as

[11] *Jewish Theology*, pp. 385–386.

the correct date and said that if Christ did not appear then he should "feel twice the disappointment" he had already felt. Out of his movement came the Adventist churches of which there are now in this country six branches with about 60,000 communicants.[12] The Mormons are premillenarians, and "Pastor Russell" founded his successful financial enterprise on the basis of his doctrine of "millennial dawn," fixing the end of the world in 1914.

There is a recrudescence of millenarianism at intervals and such revivals are usually occasioned by some special event or calamity. Fresh interest and zeal in the matter can always be predicted to take place in connection with a war or great earthquake or other disaster. These are "signs of the times," which millenarians are quick to interpret and the experts among them at once take their Daniel and Revelation and prophetic arithmetic in hand and figure out and announce the meaning of it all and the nearness of the end. The Great War was sure to start a wave of such speculation and it is now sweeping over the Christian world. The fall of Jerusalem out of Mohammedan into Christian hands has whipped the millenarian imagination up to its highest pitch of foresight and prognostication.

Proof of this comes from the highest sources. In December, 1917, the following statement was issued to the churches of England:

[12] These statistics are from H. K. Carroll's *Religious Forces of the United States*, 1912.

The undersigned, under a profound impression of the momentous nature of the present crisis, issue the accompanying statement:

The Significance of the Hour

1. That the present crisis points toward the close of the times of the Gentiles.

2. That the revelation of our Lord may be expected at any moment, when he will be manifested as evidently to his disciples as on the evening of his resurrection.

3. That the completed church will be translated to be "forever with the Lord."

4. That Israel will be restored to its own land in unbelief and be afterwards converted by the appearance of Christ on its behalf.

5. That all human schemes of reconstruction must be subsidiary to the second coming of our Lord, because all nations will then be subject to his rule.

6. That under the reign of Christ there will be a further great effusion of the Holy Spirit upon all flesh.

7. That the truths embodied in this statement are of the utmost practical value in determining Christian character and action with reference to the pressing problems of the hour.

(Signed): G. Campbell Morgan, A. C. Dixon, W. Fuller Gooch, J. Stuart Holden, H. Webb-Peploe, F. S. Webster, Dinsdale T. Young, Alfred Bird, J. S. Harrison, F. B. Meyer.

A few of these names are impressive even at this distance, and all of them are to be treated with respect. Yet we cannot restrain our surprise that these eminent gentlemen, premillenarians though they are, would put their names to such a document as this. They have added one more to the announcements that will take their place in the limbo of forgotten millenarian curi-

osities and follies. Over against this proclamation, so full of assumed knowledge of the future and of self-confidence, we are constrained to set an announcement of Jesus: "Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; *believe it not.* For there shall arise . . . false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth. Behold, he is in the secret chambers; *believe it not*" (Matt. 24: 23–26).

There is a spirit in this doctrine that leads or impels the believer in it to read the signs of the times and then announce the imminence of the second coming of Christ, if not to fix the date. Nearly every premillenarian book we have examined records the conviction of the author that the time is near. Horatius Bonar, in his *Coming and Kingdom of Christ,* published in 1849, said in his Preface that this subject "is forced on us by the ominous events of our day. . . . These signs mean something." Blackstone in *Jesus Is Coming,* speaking of the "prophetic periods," says that "earnest and prayerful study of them has given us an assured conviction that they are rapidly drawing to a close" (page 208). One of these writers announces, "The Gentile probation draweth to an end"; another, with evident sympathy, says, "Many leading ministers and evangelists of the world believe the time is drawing near"; and another, "Many signs appear to testify that the hour of the Powers of Darkness is again approach-

ing . . . which shall precede the coming of the Son of Man." The recent literature of the subject, produced under the excitement and prophetic fervency of the war, is especially positive in this prediction. In the light of the testimony of Christ himself on this point, we can only wonder at this self-assurance.

5. *Literature and Scholarship.* A few paragraphs are added in this connection on the literature of this subject and the attitude of scholarship towards it.

(1) The literature of it is enormous as it begins with the Bible and comes down to the latest book off the press. The list of "Works Consulted," prefixed to this volume, gives the names of a considerable number of these books, and only several of the more important ones on both sides of the subject are here mentioned as a guide to any who may wish to pursue the study further.

On the postmillenarian side, one of the ablest books is *Christ's Second Coming: Will It Be Premillennial?* also bearing on its back its popular title, *The Second Advent,* by the Rev. David Brown, of St. James' Free Church, Glasgow, who once held the premillenarian view, but was led to change his mind on the subject. It was first published in 1846 and was greatly enlarged in a second edition in 1849. In the present writer's judgment this is one of the strongest arguments for postmillenarianism and one of the most destructive criticisms of premillenarianism that has yet been produced, and it stands like a rock amidst the waves of much frothy literature that has been thrown up in this

controversy. The book is out of date at many points as it is concerned with meeting the arguments of the premillenarians of its day, such as Horatius and Andrew Bonar, E. B. Elliott, Bickersteth and Dalton; of course it is not in touch with our modern scholarship, and some of its minor points would not be accepted by all postmillenarians. But it is a closely linked and powerful chain of logic which in our judgment has never been broken, and it is a book that every one who would make a thorough study of this subject should read. We feel like paying a special tribute to this volume, for, having once adopted the premillenarian view, it was this book that broke the spell of that fascinating theory and planted us firmly on postmillenarian ground.

Among the smaller and more popular books on the subject may be mentioned *The Second Coming of Christ,* by Bishop S. M. Merrill, a clear and readable treatment of it. A small but valuable book is *Studies in Recent Adventism,* by Professor Henry C. Sheldon of Boston University. A recent volume is *When Christ Comes Again,* by Rev. Dr. George P. Eckman, in which the points against premillenarianism and in favor of the opposing theory are pithily put. Another recent and valuable volume is *The Millennial Hope,* by Professor Shirley J. Case, of Chicago University, which is an illuminating history of the subject and contains a selected bibliography.

On the premillenarian side we may first mention *The Coming and Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ,* by

Horatius Bonar, first published in 1849. This book, as the title page announces, is "An Examination of the Work of the Rev. D. Brown on the Second Coming of the Lord." It is an able and scholarly book and makes about the best defense that can be put up against Dr. Brown's *Second Advent,* and the two books taken together constitute a great debate between these two masters on this subject. Dean Alford in his *Greek Testament,*[13] and Archbishop Trench, in his *Parables of Our Lord,* expound and defend the premillenarian theory, and these men were first-class scholars.

Coming down to more recent works, we may mention *The Theocratic Kingdom,* published in 1884, by Rev. George N. H. Peters. This elaborate work consists of three large volumes, extending to 2175 pages, and it discusses every phase of the subject in a series of propositions numbering 206. It displays considerable learning and ingenuity, but it is highly dogmatic and does not appear to have had much influence with writers of this school. The numerous books of such writers as Rev. Dr. G. Campbell Morgan and Rev. Dr. James M. Gray are popular expositions of the subject. The well-known, widely-distributed book *Jesus Is Coming,* first published in 1878 with many subsequent editions, by William E. Blackstone, a local preacher of

[13] Dean Alford, in the Third and later editions of his *Greek Testament,* wavered in his interpretation of prophecy, saying, in his comment on Matt. 25:46, "I very much questioned whether the thorough study of Scripture prophecy would not make me more and more distrustful of all human systematizing, and less willing to hazard strong assertion on any portion of the subject."

the Methodist Episcopal Church, deserves to be treated as an authority on the subject, as in its Preface we are informed that it has been translated into twelve languages, and at its back we are given sixteen testimonials by as many well-known premillenarians in this country, commending and endorsing it without qualification. It has also been subsidized and sold and given away by the hundred thousand. We are bound to say, however, that it is the most unscholarly book on the subject we have found, and this is saying a great deal, indeed, in this line. We shall have occasion to refer to it again in this volume.

The advocates of premillenarianism hold "prophetic conferences" from time to time, and the volumes containing the published addresses of the New York conference of 1878, the Chicago conference of 1886, the Allegheny conference of 1895, the Chicago conference of 1914, and the Philadelphia conference of 1918 are an important part of this literature.

(2) We are not likely to reach a decision on this question by appeals to "the weight of scholarship," as each side necessarily determines for itself what is "scholarship" and who are "scholars" and is apt to tip the scales in its own favor. Premillenarians in their books and conferences usually make generous claims for their side and publish lists of names that are thought to be impressive. In the report of the Chicago conference of 1914 we are given a list of 453 such names and we are invited to scan them. The list under examination does not turn out to be very convinc-

ing. Of the 453 names nearly one half of them are the names of men that are dead, and the list of these has been either so carelessly or else so ignorantly prepared that it contains glaring errors. For instance, it contains the name of Rev. Dr. C. A. Briggs, who is also claimed by one of the speakers of the conference, when any one with a slight acquaintance with his books and articles knows that he was a strong opponent of the whole doctrine. It contains the name of John Wesley, who, Dr. G. P. Eckman in his book mentioned above says, "has been proudly but incorrectly claimed by the millenarians." It also contains the name of John Calvin, a towering name which these speakers and writers are in the habit of exploiting, notwithstanding the fact that Calvin himself says that "not long after (the days of Paul) arose the Millenarians, who limited the reign of Christ to a thousand years. Their fiction is too puerile to require or deserve refutation." [14] The 256 names of living men in this list might have been greatly extended on the principle on which it is drawn up, for it consists almost wholly of pastors and evangelists and there are in it only nine or ten professional Bible teachers. One of the speakers at this conference, after claiming that "the exegetical scholarship of the church in so far as this has appeared in great commentaries is pre-Kingdom in tendency," proceeds to say that "the Pharisees of old made void the Word of God by their traditions, and a present day majority of our theological professors are doing the

[14] *Institutes,* vol. II, Book 3, chapter 25, sec. 5.

same thing in our seminary class rooms." [15] This reveals the general state of suspicion of and hostility to Biblical scholarship in particular and modern learning in general that is frequently exhibited at these conferences and by these writers.

In order to find out the present attitude of Biblical scholarship on this question as represented by the professors in our theological seminaries we applied for and obtained official information on this point from twenty-seven leading institutions in eight denominations, with the result that out of the 236 members of the faculties of these theological seminaries only eight are premillenarians. This is a significant showing, and the only way to break its force is to claim that these men who are professional students of the Bible know less about its true teaching than other men.

This fact, together with the fact that nearly all the scholars of recognized rank in the list of the Chicago conference of 1914 are dead, indicates that a diminishing number of such scholars hold this doctrine as the years go by. We believe this to be the fact, and there are several reasons for it.

(a) The recent exploration and study of the apocalyptic literature of the Jews has shown that the books of Daniel and Revelation are only two out of a large body of this kind of literature, and its nature and significance are now being understood. It is highly figurative and symbolical and is not to be interpreted on any strict lines of exegesis. It is only pictorial and

[15] Report of the Chicago Conference of 1914, p. 64.

suggestive to the imagination, intended to conceal as well as to reveal; and therefore it can be used as material and basis of doctrine only as it is explained by clear Scripture teaching. This has reduced the value of these books for doctrinal purposes, but not their real value, which was and still is their power to give inspirational courage and comfort in time of trial.

(b) Modern Biblical scholarship has superseded the old method of proving a doctrine by texts picked out and patched together to suit the thing to be proved. We must now know the historical background and purpose of each book and passage and gather the general teaching and spirit of the Bible on a subject. The same scientific spirit and method of truth-seeking that are applied to nature are now applied to the Bible, and the premillenarian method of handling Scripture does not come out well under this test.

(c) Modern learning in general has made the premillenarian theory less tenable and more difficult to entertain. It grew up in an age when men thought the world was about six thousand years old and would come to an end in another thousand. A prevailing theory in the Jewish apocalyptic literature is that as God was six days in creating the world and then rested the seventh day, so the world has lasted six thousand years and now has yet another thousand to correspond with the seventh day, and will then end. Our geology and astronomy have relegated such notions to oblivion along with the Ptolemaic epicycles. We now think in terms of geological ages and astronomical cycles.

We now know the human race is much older than six thousand years and gives every indication of being in its youth or infancy with long ages yet before it. The world was a very unstable and fluctuating thing in Jewish eschatology, liable at any moment to pass away in some cosmic convulsion, but our scientific ideas of law and orderly development have rendered this eschatology obsolete.

These changed conditions in our modern world of thought have made it unfavorable for the premillenarian doctrine and have greatly increased its difficulties. It would be hard to find any recognized first-class Hebrew or Greek exegetical scholars and systematic theologians holding it to-day. A climatic change in the weather of the theological and scientific world has brought about the waning of this theory. It is a fish out of water and it is gasping for breath.

CHAPTER III

SOME PRINCIPLES OF SCRIPTURE INTERPRETATION

Our subject rests mainly upon Scripture teaching, and Scripture teaching depends on our interpretation of it. It is therefore of fundamental importance that we have and follow correct principles of interpretation in our investigation. The misinterpretation and distortion of Scripture began early, for Paul speaks of those who "corrupt the word of God" and handle it "deceitfully," and Peter speaks of Paul's epistles "wherein are some things hard to be understood, which they that are ignorant and unstedfast wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction." This misunderstanding and perversion of Scripture are still going on and we need to exercise the utmost truth-seeking care and candor that we may avoid any such pitfall and reach the truth. We shall here mention the more important principles that should guide us in this study, passing by the obvious fact that we need to understand the language in which Scripture is written with the common principles of its exegesis.

1. *The Historical Meaning.* Every book and message of the Bible was addressed to readers or hearers that were living at a definite time and place, and the writer or speaker always had a practical meaning and

message for them. This meaning was the Scripture he was inspired to write and the message he was appointed to deliver. "The *sense* of Scripture *is* Scripture." [1] Our first aim, then, in studying a passage should be to determine its meaning as understood by the writer; and to do this we must understand, not only his language and general ideas, but also the time and circumstances in which he wrote, the readers he was addressing and the purpose he had in mind. Very often we take a passage out of its connection and read it in the light of our own knowledge and purposes, and then we may get out of it something widely different from what its author put into it. We may thus read into Scripture things that were not at all in the writer's mind or even above the horizon of his time. We must always try to put ourselves within the inspired author's time and place and purpose, to crowd our minds back into his consciousness, so as to see things as he saw them, and then we can grasp his meaning and message.

In applying the principle of historical interpretation account must be constantly taken of the fact that there are in the Bible different stages and levels of moral and religious attainment, so that a process of ethical and spiritual development runs through it from beginning to end. As the books of our Bible are not at all arranged in the order of their production, this fact often complicates and obscures the process and stages of this development. The Old Testament and the

[1] Liddon, quoting Dr. Mill, in his Bampton Lectures on *Our Lord's Divinity*, p. 42 (note.)

New are the two main stages of this evolution, but there are also different strata and progressive development in each of these two main divisions. We must know not only what the Bible says and means, but also what it is; in what stage of its development any particular portion of Scripture is found and what is its application and authority for us. This principle helps to determine the meaning and use for us of every part and particle of Scripture. Some Scripture in time becomes obsolete and has no obligation for us, as the Mosaic ceremonies and Paul's prohibition of the public speaking of women in church services. The Biblical writers also necessarily clothed their meaning and message in the language, customs and thought-forms of their day. All these factors must enter into our historical interpretation and application of Scripture. The old method of quoting Scripture as though it were all on the same level and of the same authority for us is passing, and in scholarly quarters is already gone.

This principle cuts up by the roots the method so often followed of tearing texts out of their context and heaping them up under the head of some doctrine as though they all referred to it and were meant to prove it, when the matter might not have been in the mind of the writer or within the purview of his century or millennium. Thus Blackstone, in *Jesus Is Coming,* pages 196–198, gives us more than two pages of references gathered from almost every part of the Bible, which are stated to be " some of the *principal* passages which refer to our Lord's return, in the consecutive order in

which they occur in the Word, together with catch words to distinguish the same." The first reference is Deut. 33 : 2, which is the opening verse of the psalm in which Moses blessed the children of Israel and reads: "And he said, Jehovah came from Sinai, and rose from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came from the ten thousands of holy ones: at his right hand was a fiery law for them." The "catch words" given as the interpretation of this verse are, "Mt. Sinai, Mt. Seir, Transfiguration and Second Coming." What unprejudiced reader of the Bible can think that Moses or the writer of this psalm had the second coming of Christ in mind or within the range of his vision? Another reference is Hosea 6 : 3 and reads: "and he will come unto us as the rain, as the latter rain that watereth the earth." The "catch words" explaining this are, "He comes as the latter and former rain." The presence of the word "come" in this passage is the only connection it has with the second coming of Christ, and on this principle of interpretation all one needs to do is to take the concordance and pick out the passages containing this word and then he will find "the Old Testament saturated with Second Coming prophecies," as we have already quoted one writer as saying. One can always see what he wants to see. The Old Testament prophetic passages obviously refer to the first coming of the Messiah, the only coming that had yet risen above the horizon of the prophets, and it is only by a feat of athletic exegesis that these references can be heaved over the

first into the second coming. Blackstone's book is singularly destitute of the historical and critical sense in its interpretation of Scripture, and no amount of pious language will make up for this lack. We do not mean to imply that this violation of sound Scripture interpretation is confined to premillenarians, but this misleading method pervades and seriously vitiates the value of not a few of their books. This is a method by which Scripture can be made to prove anything that one wants to prove, and it is wholly out of date.

2. *Different Styles of Language.* "Speech," said Talleyrand, "was given to man to disguise his thoughts." Though we may deny that this was the purpose of the gift, yet we must admit that this is often the practical result of it. Language does not consist of words and sentences that have one fixed, clear and inescapable meaning for all minds, like a mathematical equation, but it is a fluid and iridescent thing that assumes various shapes and reflects changing hues of meaning for different minds, or for the same mind in different states and moods. The dictionary often assigns to the same word several and sometimes forty different meanings. Hence while reading the same words two readers will derive from them widely variant or even directly contradictory meanings. Hence all the diverse and divisive interpretations of the Bible, and hence the world is a dust of systems and of creeds. This difficulty is inherent in the nature of language, and we must put up with it and make the best we can of it.

There are also different styles or kinds of writing, and this adds to the inherent difficulty of language itself. Of the different kinds of literature found in the Bible we may mention history, fiction, poetry, drama, proverbs, parables, apocalyptic and letters. One of the widest and most ensnaring differences in language is that of the literal and the figurative styles of writing. The one style means just what it says, and the other suggests a meaning that is conveyed in the form of imagery or symbolism. The difference between these two styles and between all the styles of speech cannot be expressed in a sharp logical definition, but it is often atmospheric and must be felt, it is elusive and illusive and must be discerned rather than defined.

The Bible is an Oriental book and abounds in figurative language. The Hebrews thought in pictures and painted their thoughts in all the forms and colors of the imagination. Their literature is thus in a large degree pictorial and appeals to the eye and the imagination. Many of their descriptions, as in Old Testament visions of the coming Messianic kingdom and in the New Testament visions of heaven, become absurd and even repulsive when taken literally, but are surpassingly suggestive and beautiful and sublime when taken in their proper figurative sense. To take figurative language literally or literal language figuratively is to be blind to its real meaning and may subvert the very foundations of human communication.

It now rests with the interpreter to distinguish these

styles and derive the true meaning from a passage, and this throws upon him a large responsibility and also opens to him the opportunity of adjusting his interpretation to his theory or partisan purpose. If the literal meaning does not suit him, the temptation subtly insinuates itself into his mind to resort to the figurative interpretation, or, conversely, if the figurative meaning does not fit his theory, then it may seem a virtue to fall back upon the literal and loudly proclaim it as a superior honor to the Word of God.

Much depends on our accustomed traditional reading of the Bible as to whether we take it literally or figuratively with ease and comfort. The Roman Catholic can see no other than a literal meaning in our Saviour's saying, at the institution of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, "This is my body," and is shocked at any other interpretation; while the Protestant is equally shocked at the literal and takes the figurative meaning as though it were self-evident to all sane readers. It is easy for us to do what we have become accustomed to do. It is changing from an old and familiar to a new and strange interpretation that gives us a jar or a shock.

The application of this principle will often be an important if not a dominant factor in the study of our subject. The premillenarians are avowed literalists and often boast of this mode of interpretation as specially honoring the Word of God; and they frequently express themselves as being amazed if not scandalized at the "spiritualizing" of postmillenari-

ans. Blackstone has a chapter in *Jesus Is Coming* on "Literal Interpretation" in which this method is exalted to an extreme degree. "We have a literal Christ," he says, "the mediator of the new covenant. And so we believe that the Jerusalem which is 'above,' of which Sarah is typical—'the heavenly Jerusalem,' 'the new Jerusalem which cometh down out of heaven from God,' is also literal, tangible, real. How, then, are we authorized, from such examples as these (which are most prominent among those cited by postmillennialists as authority for 'spiritualizing'), to do away with the literal sense of Luke 1 : 32–33, or of the multitude of passages which predict the restoration of Israel, the coming of Christ, or which describe his glorious kingdom? There can be no warrant for it. It subverts the authority and power of the Word of God, and postmillennialists, by so doing, open wide the door for sceptics and latitudinarians of all descriptions." He then triumphantly asks the question, "If Jesus didn't mean what he said, why didn't he say what he meant?" Well, Jesus said of the bread in the sacrament, "This *is* my body": did he mean just what he said?

But one does not have to read far in the Scriptures to find passages that the most extreme literalists must "spiritualize," and then premillenarians are just as expert at this mode of interpretation as anybody else. They must do this, or put themselves in impossible positions. They take all the Old Testament prophecies of the coming Messianic kingdom as applying in a lit-

eral sense to the millennial kingdom which they place after the second coming of Christ and this leads them to results that will give almost any sober reader a pause. For instance, as we have already seen, Isaiah (66:20–23) prophesies that the temple worship with its feasts and sacrifices will be restored in Jerusalem and that "from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith Jehovah." All the people in the world are to go every week to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices in the temple! Many premillenarians do not balk or blink even at this, but some of them at this point abandon the literal and take to the figurative interpretation, as the Jews themselves do. There is no fixed rule by which we can infallibly distinguish the literal from the figurative meaning, but in doing this we must follow the general trend of Scripture teaching and use our common sense.

3. *Apocalyptic Literature.* There is one kind of literature in the Bible that calls for special mention, the apocalyptic, a word that means unveiling or disclosing. This is found in the books of Daniel and Revelation, with patches of it in other books of Scripture. The Jews abounded in this kind of writing and produced many such books that were not incorporated in the canon, such as the Psalms of Solomon, First and Second Maccabees, Enoch, the Assumption of Moses, Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, Wisdom, Esdras, and Baruch. These writings were especially prolific in the first two centuries before and the first century after

Christ when Jewish and Christian believers were subjected to great persecutions. The characteristic of these books is that of highly figurative and symbolic representations intended to reveal and yet conceal truth. Daniel and Revelation both unroll panoramic visions which portray catastrophic calamities and judgments which could not be taken literally and yet conveyed great practical lessons. The Bible is an Oriental book throughout, and the Oriental mind by nature is imaginative and figurative in its modes of conception and expression.

Now the principle of historic interpretation applies to these symbolical books. They were addressed to believers under terrible trials, Daniel to those under the atrocities of Antiochus Epiphanes in the second century B. C., and Revelation to those in the dreadful days of the Roman persecution in the first century A. D., and the object was to sustain and comfort believers in these tragical times. The messages had to be conveyed in terms and figures that would not excite the intensified persecution of these enemies and yet would "unveil" the message to the persecuted believers; hence the apocalyptic form, a kind of literary camouflage with which the Jews were familiar and which would be plain in its meaning to them. "The books have been aptly called 'tracts for the bad times,' and their main object was to comfort and console the godly amid circumstances of almost unparalleled oppression and to strengthen the faith in the righteousness of God of those who were sorely tried by the hard and cruel lot to

which they were subjected. The content of the teaching contained in the literature may be summed up in the words of Rev. 2: 10, 'Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life.'" [2] This fact must be held steadily in view in interpreting these books, or they will become a phantasmagoria in which our wildest dreams will run riot. They have proven a mirage which has lured countless commentators into the pitfalls of fanciful interpretation. They have always been the "happy hunting grounds" of religious visionaries and fanatics.

Included within the apocalyptic literature were eschatological elements dealing with last things in panoramic and cataclysmic style, a special kind of apocalyptic which will be considered later on in our study.[3]

4. *Successive Fulfillments of Prophecy.* There are prophecies in both the Old and the New Testaments, and as a rule these predictions had a near and partial and then a remote and final fulfillment. The prophet was always speaking in the first place to the people of his own day and country, and his message had a practical meaning for them. He never spoke, after the manner of pagan oracles, in riddles that were inexplicable puzzles to his hearers, but always spoke into their business and bosoms. Paul tells us what he thinks of

[2] Maurice Jones, *The New Testament in the Twentieth Century*, p. 91.

[3] A leading authority on this subject is R. H. Charles, *Hebrew, Jewish, and Christian Eschatology.* Also Lewis A. Muirhead, *The Eschatology of Jesus,* and Shailer Mathews, *The Messianic Hope in the New Testament.*

the "gift" of speaking incoherent utterances and says, "he that prophesieth speaketh unto men edification, and exhortation, and consolation," and declares that he would "rather speak five words with my understanding, that I might instruct others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue" (1 Cor. 14: 3, 19).

The great prophecy of the Old Testament was that of the coming Messiah, and yet these prophecies nearly always first fixed on some type or representative of the Messiah immediately in view, such as the "servant" of Isaiah (42: 1), and then looked on beyond these near fulfillments to the final fulfillment in the coming of the personal Messiah. In a similar way the great prophecy of the New Testament is the second coming of Christ, but this prophecy also, as we shall find, had and still has successive partial fulfillments in the near foreground which will finally culminate in "the blessed hope and appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ." Often also the prophecy slips beyond the horizon of this world into the eternal world of glory; and as when a gorgeous sunset floods the west with its many-colored glow and splendor it may be difficult to tell where the earth leaves off and the sky begins, so in these prophecies bathing the whole future in glory it is often difficult to discern where they pass from earth into heaven. This principle of interpretation becomes of great importance in explaining the complex Scripture teaching concerning the coming of Christ and is a key that helps to unlock this problem.

5. *Scripture Unsystematic yet Unitary.* An important general fact or feature of the Bible is that it is not a systematic body of knowledge, setting forth doctrines in an orderly and complete form, but it is rather a mass of raw materials which must be worked up into organic relations. It is not a work on systematic theology, but only the quarry out of which the stone for such a temple can be obtained. It is a record of the history and development of the Hebrew people and of the founding of Christianity, and it sets down its facts as they occurred or as they suit the purpose in view with little regard to logical or chronological order. It is a record of religious experience and not a theological treatise. Each of its writers belongs to his own age and has his own point of view, and a process of development runs through the whole body of its literature. Its facts and teachings must be compared, classified and arranged in a logical system and thus it is transformed into theology.

While the book is unsystematic in method and form, yet it is not a chaos of discordant facts lacking any real coherence, but it is a unitary and harmonious book in its fundamental principles. One increasing purpose runs through it from beginning to end, the redemptive plan of God who so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life. This golden thread is woven into its entire web and texture and binds it into coherency and harmony. This general teaching and spirit of the Bible must enter into the

process of determining the meaning of each particular part, passage and text. When a passage is torn out of the book and taken by itself, it can be made to yield a meaning that is contradicted by the general teaching of Scripture, and the book has the common right of every book to be interpreted in its own light. One text or passage is too narrow a basis on which to erect a doctrine, but the whole groundwork of the Bible must be taken in its unity as the foundation and test of a Scripture truth.

This principle of interpretation applies to the second coming of Christ. This event is nowhere treated by itself in a connected and complete form in the Scriptures, but here and there partial statements are made concerning it, or passing allusions refer to it, or glimpses are caught of it. It is presented in a piecemeal and occasional way, parts of it are probably lacking, and much of it is clothed in highly figurative and symbolic language. This unsystematic method of Scripture gives us trouble in constructing any doctrine, as in the case of the person of Christ, and this is especially true of the second coming of Christ. No theory on the subject is free from difficulty. Both the postmillenarians and the premillenarians have their embarrassments and unsolved remainders in the construction of their theories; and those that reject both of these views and devise some other scheme to account for the facts run into equal or greater difficulties of their own.

This fact should bid us beware of dogmatism and intolerance in the study of our subject and should beget in us a careful and candid and charitable spirit of inquiry. Our only aim and quest should be to reach the truth concerning this precious faith which as Christian believers is our common heritage and hope.

CHAPTER IV

THE KINGDOM OF GOD: ITS NATURE

THE kingdom of God is the key to the question of the coming of the Lord. The correct concept at this point will open the right door to this problem and it will refuse to fit any other door.

The phrase "kingdom of God," with the synonymous phrase "kingdom of heaven" and such equivalent words as "dominion" and "throne," occurs more than two hundred times in the New Testament alone, which fact shows how large a place this kingdom fills in Scripture teaching. Like any general term, it is used in various senses. In its widest sense it means God's universal sovereignty over the universe (Ps. 45:6); in a narrower sense it means God's providential rule over the world (Ps. 22:28); in a still narrower sense it means God's theocratic rule over Israel (Ex. 19:6), and through them over the world (Ps. 72:11). In time this idea developed or rather degenerated into the apocalyptic doctrine of an eschatological kingdom to be introduced with cataclysmic power, and this hope was prevalent in Jewish life and literature in the time of Jesus and came out in the question of the disciples after his resurrection, "Lord, dost thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"

(Acts 1:6). In some instances the term looks beyond this world into the heavenly eternal kingdom, as when Paul declared "that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God" (I Cor. 15:50).

The sense, however, in which it is commonly used is the rule of God in the hearts of obedient souls. It is a general designation for all those in all ages who turn to God in faith and constitute the total society of the redeemed.[1] Some of the characteristics of the nature of this kingdom will now be unfolded.

1. *Not of this World.* "My kingdom is not of this world," said Jesus to Pilate: "if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence" (John 18:36). This describes the kingdom negatively. The meaning is not that the kingdom is not in this world and adapted to it but belongs only to the heavenly eternal world, for it is in this world and has relations with it at every point. But it is not of this world in the sense that it does not have the form and spirit of this world. It is not a materialistic and political kingdom, it does not occupy a certain geographical territory and consist in the possessions and powers of earthly empires. It has no land or property, it does not consist in material prosperity. Rich soils and wealthy cities, railways and steamships, telegraphs and telephones, and all the

[1] A collection of definitions of the kingdom gathered from church creeds and modern writers will be found in Candlish, *The Kingdom of God,* pp. 392–397. See also Kennedy, *St. Paul's Conceptions of the Last Things,* pp. 282–283.

power and pomp of our splendid material civilization do not constitute the kingdom, though it may and does use these things. It is not a political organization and is not carried on by political means. It has no sword or spirit of self-aggrandizement. It does not seek world domination after the manner of political and military world empires.

It is true that the Old Testament prophets do often paint pictures of the kingdom in materialistic colors and such a kingdom became the passionate hope of the Jews. A glowing vision of the kingdom is found in Isaiah 60, but it is difficult to think the prophet took his vision literally. He was a poet and saw as a poet. The vision closes with the prediction, "The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but Jehovah will be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory" (verse 19). Can any one take this literally and does this not show that the whole vision is symbolical and poetic? The fact that the Jews themselves came to take these prophecies in the most literal form and thereby cherished absurd dreams and ambitions that were cruelly disappointed and that also blinded them to the true spiritual kingdom is no reason why we should repeat their fallacy and folly. Besides, there are not wanting many passages which show that the prophets understood the inward spiritual nature of the kingdom as consisting in "a new heart and a new spirit" (Ezek. 36:26), and in doing justly and loving kindness and walking humbly with God (Micah 6:8),

and at the very first mention of the kingdom in the Old Testament Jehovah declared to Israel, "Ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation" (Ex. 19:6).

It is a fundamental principle in the structure of the Bible that the Old Testament is fulfilled in the New, the shadows of the Old in the substance of the New, the lamb of sacrifice in the Lamb of God, the altar in the cross; and in the same line the Jewish prophecies of the Messiah are fulfilled in Christ and the prophecies of the Messianic kingdom are being fulfilled in the kingdom of Christ as it is now being established in the world. This view is taught throughout the New Testament itself. Jesus chose as the text of his very first sermon the opening verses of Isaiah 61, which is a graphic picture of the coming Messianic kingdom, and the first sentence of his sermon was, "To-day hath this scripture been fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4:16–21), by which he "spiritualized" the whole chapter and prophecy and applied it to himself. Later, in speaking to his skeptical disciples after his resurrection, he drove this principle home into their unperceiving minds and unbelieving hearts: "And beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:27). Peter on the day of Pentecost declared that the outpouring of the Spirit on that occasion was "that which hath been spoken through the prophet Joel" (Acts 2:16). Still more definite and striking was the argument used by James

at the council called at Jerusalem with reference to the attempt of the Judaizers to "put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples" in the form of circumcision and other Jewish ceremonies. James along with Peter withstood this scheme, which would have been fatal to Christianity, and repeated the point Peter had made, "how first God visited the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After these things I will return, and I will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up" (Acts 15: 14–16). The very point of this argument is that "the tabernacle of David" is built "again" in the Christian church or in the kingdom of God in the Christian dispensation.[2] Paul also frequently taught and stood up for the same doctrine. "And if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise." (Gal. 3: 29). The whole eloquent argument of the Epistle to the Hebrews is that the old dispensation is fulfilled in the new and has vanished as "a shadow of the good things to come" (Heb. 10: 1).

Perhaps the most surprising feat in all the surpris-

[2] A speaker (Dr. James M. Gray) at the Philadelphia prophetic conference of 1918 quoted this prophecy (Amos 9: 11–12) and said that it will be fulfilled "after the church age is completed" (Addresses at the Conference, p. 137), apparently being wholly forgetful of the fact that James declared that this very prophecy is already being fulfilled in the Christian dispensation. As this occurs in a volume entitled *Light on Prophecy* it shows that it is well to study prophecy carefully before attempting to throw "light" on it, a precaution that is frequently disregarded in these addresses.

ing exegesis of premillenarianism is its attempted violent disruption and dislocation of the whole Bible by its transference of these Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament from the first coming and present kingdom of Christ to his final coming.[3] And then it takes these prophecies literally and this lands it in its materialistic views of the millennial kingdom. It is forced to do this by the necessity of its literal interpretation, but it thereby runs against the letter and spirit of the New Testament and involves itself in hopeless confusion. This "spiritualizing" of the Old Testament prophecies by applying them to the present kingdom of God, which is such a scandal to premillenarianism, is thus effected in the New Testament itself and is one of its foundation principles.

2. *Its Spirituality.* In the New Testament the material trappings of the kingdom, as prefigured in the Old Testament in forms adapted to the religious development of that day, are stripped off and it appears in its pure spirituality. It is now clearly brought out that the kingdom has its seat in the heart and consists in the rule of God in the soul or in moral and spiritual dispositions and habits. Jesus expressly set forth this inward spiritual nature of the kingdom in contrast

[3] This is not the Jewish view. "The Messianic Kingdom, being of mere earthly splendor, could not form the end, and so the Great Judgment was placed at its close and followed the Resurrection." K. Kohler in the article on "Eschatology" in the Jewish *Encyclopædia,* vol. V, p. 217. That is, according to the view of the Jews the Messianic kingdom attends the first coming of the Messiah; of course they know nothing of a second coming.

with the outward materialistic form of the Jewish expectation of his day: "And being asked by the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God cometh, he answered them and said, The kingdom cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo, here! or, There! for lo, the kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17: 20–21). Paul expresses the same truth when he declares that "the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 14: 17). It begins in repentance and faith and goes on to purify and pervade the whole personality in mind and heart, soul and body, character and conduct and life. It sets up the throne of God in the heart, "casting down imaginations, and every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God, and brings every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (II Cor. 10: 5). The beatitudes of Jesus describe its inner spirit and substance as humility, meekness, righteousness, mercy, purity and peacefulness. Paul, describing the same inner kingdom, says "the fruit of the light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth" (Eph. 5: 9), and "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control" (Gal. 5: 22–23).

In the Gospel and Epistles of John the kingdom takes the form of life, and this word, so frequent in and characteristic of his writings, is almost a synonym of the kingdom. "I came," said Jesus, "that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly"

(John 10:10). "And this is life eternal, that they should know thee the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ" (John 17:3). The kingdom is thus the rule of God over and in the spirit of man by which his whole personality is cleansed from the rebellion of sin and subdued into willing and joyous obedience to God in Christ and transformed into his likeness. It is not a matter of outer position, but of inner disposition. We do not enter it so much as it enters us. The redeemed soul is a kingdom in itself, with God on its throne bringing all its states and acts into harmony with his will and spirit.

3. *Relation to the Church and Other Agencies.* The soul must have a body, ideas must have hands and feet. A pure spirit cannot go naked through this world. The kingdom of God, while not an outward form, must yet use outward means. This is one of its necessities and is yet one of its greatest dangers. Ordinances have ever been the peril of the kingdom. The danger is that the outer form will smother the inner life, the letter kill the spirit. This was the fatality that overtook the Jewish church, and the Christian church has not wholly escaped it.

Jesus himself founded a church. He did not simply cast his ideas out into the air to survive or perish, but committed them to men whom he had trained to receive and propagate them. At first he attempted to work inside the Jewish church, but this plan soon had to be abandoned. The old organization had lost vitality and plasticity and had become inhospitable and intractable

to new ideas and further adaptation; it had crystallized into traditionalism that refused to yield to new demands; the old wineskins would not hold the new wine; the old seed had gone to husk and would bear no more fruit. Jesus therefore was forced to work outside of its bounds and to lay new foundations. He left the temple with its elaborate but lifeless ritual and resorted to the synagogue, and from the synagogue he was driven to the street and seashore. Out in the open, freed from the restrictions of the past, he made a new start. He gathered twelve men of unsophisticated minds around him and for three years he poured into them his own mind and molded them to his purpose. Even they were somewhat refractory material and one of them proved false, but at length they responded to his touch and became mighty men who have left their impress upon the history of religion and of the world.

Yet the church Jesus founded was not the kingdom of God. He mentioned the church only twice, while the kingdom was ever in his thought and on his lips. The kingdom is life, and life incarnates itself in no one type of organization but breaks into myriad forms. The church is one form in which the kingdom of God embodies itself. All that is going on in the church, so far as it fulfills the will of God, belongs to the kingdom as its means. The church catholic is a mighty and magnificent organization that has embraced the earth and is the most powerful human agency for establishing the kingdom of God in the world. Yet

church and kingdom are not coincident. Many persons and agencies are in the church that are not in the kingdom, and many are in the kingdom that are not in the church. The kingdom is vastly broader and deeper than the church and includes all good men and means that are doing the will of God. God fulfills himself in many ways, and his kingdom is his immanent life working in all the agencies that are doing his will in the world. "The kingdom of heaven is organizing rather than organized. It creates for itself an organization; yet the kingdom of heaven is not the organization, but rather the life which produces it. The life which creates the organization penetrates and purifies also the family and the State, renovates individuals, and blooms and fructifies in Christian civilizations; and these also are its historical manifestations. Always the kingdom of heaven is within you. In the variously organized churches of history, without doubt, the life has been revealed and organized. But no one has been the only and complete outgrowth and manifestation of the life."[4]

4. *An Individual yet a Social Kingdom.* The kingdom of God is both individual and social. Jesus gave both sides of this truth full-orbed expression in the command, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Matt. 22:39). The kingdom begins in the individual soul as an act of faith and repentance and obedience, and these are necessarily and intensely personal

[4] Dr. Samuel Harris, quoted by Candlish, *The Kingdom of God*, p. 396.

acts and states. No one can do these things for another, and every one must do them for himself. This individuality of the kingdom is everywhere recognized and emphasized in the Scriptures. Jesus constantly made the pointedly personal demand and appeal, "Ye must be born anew" (John 3:7) and declares, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Rev. 3:20). The kingdom, having thus been set up in the heart, pervades the soul in the process of growth in grace by which every evil imagination is cast down and the whole soul and body is brought into subjection to Christ. This is true self-love, which consists, not in selfishness which exalts the self at the expense of others, but in the proper appreciation and development and use and enjoyment of one's own personality in harmony with all other selves. Selfishness turns the soul into a sponge that sucks up everything around it, but the true love of self fills the soul that it may be a fountain and fling around it refreshing streams.

But this individual kingdom immediately and necessarily passes into a social form. "Love thy neighbor" is the logical application and completion of "as thyself." The self in isolation from other selves is only a partial soul, and only as it is joined with other selves in a social whole can it grow into full personality and power. This aspect of the kingdom is equally prominent with the individual aspect in the Scriptures and is especially conspicuous in the teaching

and practice of Jesus. He not only preached to the multitudes and invited and urged them to enter the kingdom, but he lived in a social world of personal intimacies and many-sided sympathies as he mingled with rich and poor, business men and beggars, Pharisees and fishermen, scholars and peasants, doctors of divinity and fallen women, Jews and Gentiles. He touched all social problems and perils, the family and the state, the relations of employers and employees, and especially the responsibilities and perils of wealth and the equally difficult problems of poverty. "The gospel of social service," which is being emphasized in our day as though it were a new thing, is as old as the first preaching of the gospel by Jesus himself.

5. *A Democratic Kingdom.* This phrase once would have sounded paradoxical as though it were a self-contradiction, but it expresses a familiar fact in our modern world in which nearly all the great kingdoms have been democratized with constitutional governments responsible to the people, and only a few autocratic kingdoms or empires, such as Germany and Turkey, remain as relics of a bygone age, and they are now passing and will soon be gone. The essential principle of democracy is, in Jefferson's phrase, "the consent of the governed," and this is the only type of government that appeals to us and that we would tolerate. Is, then, the kingdom of God an autocracy? Have we escaped from and destroyed autocracy in our political life only to fall back into it and have its yoke fastened upon us in our religious

life? It is a wonderful fact that the kingdom of God, coming down to us out of an ancient autocratic world, is yet democratic in spirit and even in form.

The universal kingdom of God whereby he reigns in and over the universe is and must be a divine sovereignty, for no finite subjects could presume to determine such a stupendous government. But the kingdom of God in the narrower sense of God's rule in the souls of men is truly democratic, for it does rest on the consent of the governed. It is not imposed on believers by force, for not even omnipotence can force a soul to believe and obey against its consent. All of the invitations of the gospel are addressed to men in the exercise of their own free will. The call is, "He that will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22: 17), and "If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from myself" (John 7: 17). And if any one will not enter the kingdom freely he has it in his power to stay out and say with all the unbelieving, "We will not that this man reign over us" (Luke 19: 14). It is one of the fundamental principles and one of the glories of this kingdom that it is democratic, resting on the consent of the governed; in fact, it is the most democratic institution on earth, knowing no geographical or racial or class lines, but throwing open its doors to all men of every race and rank and social condition and giving them the right to enter into its privileges. Not only so, but it gives its subjects a voice in its government, for they all are kings

and priests unto God and are citizens of heaven. It contains no official or privileged classes, no hereditary ranks, no aristocracy, no social distinctions. "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of the body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free; and were all made to drink of one Spirit" (I Cor. 12:12–13). The kingdom of God, then, is not an anachronism in our modern world, a relic left behind as a stranded and obsolete form of government by the onward sweep of democracy, but it finds its congenial soil and atmosphere in a democratic world and will have wider room and a readier reception in the more fully developed democratic world of to-morrow.

6. *A Present yet a Future Kingdom.* It may surprise some readers to learn that premillenarians, as a class, deny that the kingdom of God is yet in the world. They hold that the kingdom will not be set up in this world until Christ comes in glory and establishes it at Jerusalem as its capital, and when they pray, "Thy kingdom come," they pray for this visible kingdom. "The Church militant," says Blackstone, "which was begun on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) ends at the Rapture, before the Tribulation. The kingdom begins with the Revelation, at the close of the Tribulation. It is the personal reign of Christ on earth." [5]

[5] *Jesus Is Coming*, p. 87.

This position is maintained in the face of the nature of the kingdom and of much express Scripture teaching. If the kingdom were a spectacular establishment with a local capital and a worldwide display of power, such as the Jews and the disciples themselves looked for and the premillenarians still look for, it would be necessary to locate it in the future, for no such kingdom has yet appeared. But as the kingdom is not outward and material but inward and spiritual and consists in the reign of God in the hearts of men, it is by its very nature in the world now. In so far as men are doing the will of God his kingdom is within them.

The Scripture teaching on this point is clear and convincing. The kingdom as an inward state and dominion of God in the heart was present in Old Testament times. "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me" (Ps. 51:10). "Bless Jehovah, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name" (Ps. 103:1). The fact of God's existing kingship over Israel was familiar to the prophets. "I am Jehovah, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King" (Isaiah 43:15).

When we enter the New Testament we first hear John the Baptist and then Jesus proclaiming, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." This expression does not mean that the kingdom was not in some degree already existing, but only that it was near as a special manifestation. We may say that the sunrise is at hand, though the dawn has been brightening the East

for more than an hour and the sun has always been shining. So the kingdom had long been in the world and its dawn had been flooding the horizon of the prophetic future with glory, but now the Sun of Righteousness was about to rise in its splendor. In the Lord's prayer, the petition, "Thy kingdom come," is elucidated by the petitions, "Hallowed be thy name" and "Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth," showing that hallowing the name and doing the will of God are equivalent to the coming of his kingdom. And as God's name is to be hallowed and his will done on earth, not only in the future, but right now, this kingdom is now present.

The Pharisees once asked Jesus this very question, "when the kingdom of God cometh," and his answer can leave no doubt on this point. "He answered and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo, here! or, There! for lo, the kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17: 20–21). Whether the Greek preposition in this case is translated "within" or "among" you, does not alter the sense in this connection. "If 'within you' be adopted," says Plummer in *The International Critical Commentary* on Luke, "the meaning will be, 'Instead of being something externally visible, the Kingdom is essentially spiritual: it is in your hearts, *if* you possess it at all.'" In his *Greek Testament* Dean Alford, who was a premillenarian, takes the preposition in the sense "among" you and says: "The kingdom of God was *begun among them*, and continues thus

making its way in the world, without observation of men." When Jesus said, "But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness" (Matt. 6:33), was he urging his hearers to seek a future kingdom and future righteousness, or was he urging them to seek existing realities and present blessings?

In the parables of the Sower, Tares, Mustard-seed, Leaven, Hid Treasure, Pearl of Great Price and Draw-net recorded in Matthew 13, with which Jesus began his teaching in parables, all are in the present tense and describe the kingdom of heaven as an existing reality. Two of them, the Tares and the Draw-net, conclude with the statement, "so shall it be in the end of the world"; and as the "end of the world" or "end of the age" always means the end of this present human world or dispensation, this fact locates the kingdom in the existing world.

It is equally clear that Paul regarded the kingdom as present. In Rom. 14:17–18 he says: "The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. For he that herein serveth Christ is well-pleasing to God, and approved of men." "Here it is noteworthy," says Kennedy, "that membership in the kingdom and serving Christ are deliberately identified."[6] In Col. 1:12–14 he gives "thanks unto the Father," "who delivered us out of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love"; and I Cor. 4:20 he declares "the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power."

[6] *St. Paul's Conceptions of the Last Things*, p. 289.

It does not appear how Scripture could be more explicit in teaching that the kingdom of God is a present reality.

On the other hand, the kingdom is also future. By its very nature it has not yet fully come, either externally or internally, but is only coming. Like any growing thing it exists at first as a seed or root, and its full growth and final fruit are yet to come. Scripture also abundantly recognizes this aspect of the kingdom. The petition, "Thy kingdom come," prays that it may come in larger degree and fuller power; and all our Christian worship and work are means of widening and deepening this coming kingdom. This future stretches through all the ages to come and goes beyond this world into the heavenly eternal kingdom which will be the final fulfillment and perfection of the kingdom. Jesus referred to this final kingdom when at the institution of the Lord's Supper he said to his disciples, "Verily I say unto you, I shall no more drink of the fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God" (Mark 14:25). Paul refers to the same final kingdom when he says, "Then cometh the end when he shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father" (I Cor. 15:24); and again when he writes, "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption" (I Cor. 15:50).

The kingdom thus has a history. It dates from the first entrance of the Spirit and reign of God into the

heart of man, exists in the present, and rolls forward with widening sweep and power into the future and is lost in eternity.

7. *Eschatological Aspects of the Kingdom.* We have already referred to the apocalyptic and eschatological writings of the Jews in which they set forth in highly figurative forms their views of the state of the world in its relation to God and his judgments and especially in relation to cataclysmic events attending the end of the world. Daniel and Revelation are two such books, and passages conceived in the same style are found in the teaching of Jesus and in some of the epistles of the apostles. The great eschatological discourse recorded in Matthew 24–25 is the chief instance in the teaching of Jesus; and another such passage is found in II Peter 3: 10–13. The question of the interpretation of these passages has become of great interest in the light of recent study of Jewish eschatology. As usual when any new principle or line of interpretation is adopted and developed it is likely to be overworked and carried to an extreme. Some interpreters would reduce practically the whole teaching of Jesus to eschatology and read this idea into nearly all his sayings. On the other hand, we cannot swing to the opposite extreme of declaring that this Jewish expectation did not influence and color his teaching. The evidence that he adopted this mode of expression and accommodated his teaching to it is as plain as that he used other ideas and customs of his time. He had to do this in order to reach the minds of his hearers at

all, just as he had to use the language of his people and day. These eschatological descriptions are symbolical representations of impending and future events which could not otherwise be so well expressed. The chief matter in each case is the reality to which he referred and not the figurative symbol he used; and this meaning can be determined only in accordance with the general teaching of Scripture and the nature of things. Some of these eschatological passages will come up for later discussion.

A judicious view of this subject has been expressed by Professor F. G. Peabody, a thorough scholar and unprejudiced interpreter. "It has been held," he says, "with ingenuity and learning, that Jesus shared, with his people and age, these eschatological ideals, and that the key of his teaching concerning the kingdom is to be sought, not in his more spiritualized sayings, but in the apocalyptic utterances and prophecies of the gospels. There are, beyond doubt, many passages which lend themselves to this view; and the method of those New Testament critics who interpret the teaching of Jesus in its relation to the antecedent traditions and ideals of Hebrew faith, has been most illuminating and fruitful. It is difficult, however, to subordinate in the teaching of Jesus the spiritual sayings to these Hebraic hopes. In disposing of one difficulty of interpretation another difficulty is introduced. If the mind of Jesus was thus supremely concerned with an apocalyptic kingdom, how can he have referred to it as 'within'? To believe that the spirit-

ual and ethical teaching concerning the kingdom should have been superimposed by the followers of Jesus on the view really held by the Master, is contrary to every indication in the gospels of the true relation between Jesus and his disciples." And again, when speaking of the adoption by Jesus of the Messianic phrase, kingdom of God, he says: "On this flexible phrase, then, with its capacity for spiritualization, Jesus fastens when he desires to describe his mission. He knows that his conception of it is not that which is popularly current among his people, but he utilizes the only phrase which is in the least adequate for his teaching, believing that the kingdom of which he speaks is not only in no way contrary to the national hope, but in reality represents the interior truth of that national idea." [7]

A liberal critic, Shailer Mathews, writes: "As one discovers in Jesus something quite other than a mere statement of the better element of pharisaism in general, even more does one discover in his entire career the mingled rejection and acceptance of elements in current messianism." [8] And even so radical a critic and profound a student of Jewish eschatology as R. H. Charles declares that its "ideas are subordinated to the central force of the Christian movement" [9]: that is, Christ and his apostles controlled current Jewish eschatology, and it did not control them. They in some

[7] *Jesus Christ and the Social Question*, pp. 94, 95–96.
[8] *The Messianic Hope in the New Testament*, p. 67.
[9] Article on "Eschatology" in *Encyclopædia Biblica*, vol. II, p. 1373.

degree adopted it, but they also adapted and dominated it, they spiritualized and utilized it. "The eschatology of the New Testament," says Dr. A. E. Garvie, "attaches itself not only to that of the Old Testament but also to that of contemporary Judaism, but it avoids the extravagances of the latter."[10] There has been a reaction against the attempt to submerge the New Testament in Jewish eschatology and reduce Jesus to the level of the ideas of his age, and it is seen that he subjected and turned this eschatology to his own teaching and purpose, as he did all the ideas of his day.

[10] Article on "Eschatology" in *Encyclopædia Britannica,* vol. IX, p. 762.

CHAPTER V

THE KINGDOM OF GOD: ITS GROWTH

We have already touched on the fact that the kingdom of God is a growth, and this aspect of its nature now needs to be more fully developed. The kingdom is not an institution that could be set up all at once by some sudden stroke of cosmic power, but it is a Christian community bound together by inward spirituality, and such a society is a psychological organism that can be produced only by a gradual process.

1. *Scripture Teaching.* The Scriptures bear out this view in abundant teaching. Of the seven parables of Jesus recorded in Matthew 13, four compare the kingdom of heaven to processes of growth, and the principle of them is expressly stated to be, "first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear" (Mark 4:28), a beautiful illustration of the process of evolution. The parable of the Sower illustrates how the seed sown springs up in a multiplied harvest of thirty, sixty and a hundred fold. The Mustard-seed pictures a small seed growing into a great tree attracting flocks of birds to its shelter and thereby illustrating how the kingdom of heaven, beginning with the apparently small seed of the first Christian teaching, is to grow into a far-spreading tree which will attract and

protect many affiliated institutions, such as Christian colleges and hospitals.

The Leaven is specially suggestive of growth as it works its way atom by atom through the meal until it pervades the whole mass. Because the parables of the Leaven and the Mustard-seed especially embarrass the premillenarian view that the kingdom of God is not to be gradually established as a growth by the spread of the gospel but is to be suddenly set up at the coming of Christ, some premillenarians hold that the leaven does not represent the kingdom, as the parable itself says it does, but the spirit of evil, as it does in some other Scripture passages; and that the birds in the mustard-tree are unclean birds of sin. But this interpretation is far-fetched and forced. Trench, who was a premillenarian, repudiates both of these perversions and points out that it is no more strange that leaven should in one passage of Scripture represent good and in another evil than that a lion should in one place (Rev. 5:5) represent Christ and in another (I Pet. 5:8) the devil.[1] "Leaven here," affirms Dr. Campell Morgan, "as everywhere else in Scripture, is a type not of good but of evil; and if you will carefully search your Bible, you will find that in no single instance is there variation from this principle."[2] Well, we did "carefully search" our Bible, evidently more carefully than Dr. Morgan searched his, and found two "variations from this principle": "With

[1] *The Parables of Our Lord*, p. 113.
[2] *God's Message with Man*, pp. 56–57.

cakes of leavened bread he shall offer his oblation with the sacrifice of his peace-offerings" (Lev. 7:13); "Ye shall bring out of your habitations two wave-loaves of two tenth parts of an ephah: they shall be of fine flour, they shall be baken of leaven, for first-fruits unto Jehovah" (Lev. 23:17). "We may therefore dismiss the eccentric notion as unworthy of serious consideration."[3] The point of all these four parables is that the kingdom of heaven is a growth and not a cataclysm; it is an unfolding seed and not exploding dynamite.

Other Scripture teaching is in accord with these parables. As individuals having the kingdom within us we are to "grow in grace," and the great commission (Matt. 28:18–20) lays down a program of Christian progress extending through time to the end of the world. As a matter of fact, the kingdom has been and is a growth from its first inception to the present day.

2. *A Mixed Growth.* The parables of the Tares and the Draw-net illustrate the fact of the mixed growth of good and evil in the kingdom. The servants in the Tares complained to the householders that there were tares in the wheat and proposed to root them up, but he said that an enemy had sowed the tares among the wheat and forbade his servants from rooting them up lest they root up the wheat also. The same aspect of the kingdom is illustrated by the bad fish, caught in the net along with the good, which were

[3] Bruce, *Parabolic Teaching of Christ*, p. 107.

sorted out and cast away. The meaning is that the kingdom of heaven is not now and never will be wholly free from attendant evils, evils often so closely intertwined with the good that we cannot wisely undertake to root them out. The effort to purify the church from unworthy members and suspected heresy has time and again done harm and sometimes has resulted in disaster. This parable is used by the premillenarians to prove that the world is not to grow better under the preaching of the gospel but rather worse until Christ comes and sets up his kingdom. Undoubtedly it does prove that evil is to remain in the world until the end, but no conclusion can be drawn from this fact as to the relative growth and proportion of the two. As a matter of fact, tares are a comparatively small part of a wheatfield, practically a negligible part; and we may rather see in this parable a prospect of a full wheatfield at the end of the world in which tares will be relatively few. So also the worthless fish caught in a net are ordinarily few compared with the good. Postmillenarians do not hold that the world under the preaching of the gospel is to be converted down to the last man, but only that it will become a field of grain containing a great harvest of good mingled with some tares of evil. Besides, tares may become wheat in this field, for the biology of grace can effect a transmutation of species that the biology of nature cannot achieve.

3. *An Intensive and Extensive Growth.* The parables of the Sower and the Mustard-seed illustrate intensive and that of the Leaven extensive growth. The

grain stays in its field and does not spread into neighboring fields, and the tree adheres to its root, and their growth consists in developing their own life into full fruition. The kingdom grows in this intensive way, developing each principle of its nature from seed and root to fruit in each place in which it has been planted, in each heart and family and community. This is a very important aspect of the growth of the kingdom as it is by this process that we are to grow in grace and "attain . . . unto a fullgrown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13). It is conceivable that the kingdom might be planted in one place or in a limited group of people and grow in them and yet there stay.

But the kingdom also grows extensively, and the Leaven brings out clearly this aspect of it. In all of these parables of growth "the field is the world," and the mass of meal in the parable of the Leaven can represent nothing less than humanity or the world. The leaven works its way through this mass extensively, each atom of fermentation not only developing its own minute living organism, but also infecting neighboring atoms with the same life and thus slowly spreading through the meal until the last atom has been touched with the mystic contagion and the whole mass is transformed with the new life. So does the gospel leaven work its way through society from individual to individual. Andrew, having found Jesus, at once sought his brother Peter and brought him to Jesus, and Philip, having been touched with the new

life, promptly imparted it to Nathanael, and thus the leaven began to spread and so has it come down to us. The kingdom also spreads extensively through the institutions and activities of society, transforming its physical environment, houses, sanitation, manufacturing, trade, business, social conditions, education, politics, national and international affairs, war and all world problems, beating swords into plowshares and spears into pruning-hooks, writing "Holy unto Jehovah" upon the very bells of the horses, until the whole mass of humanity shall be imbued and governed by Christian principles and spirit. This process is to go on until the great commission is fulfilled in which Christ declares, "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28: 18–20).

"Nor can we consider," says Trench, "these words, 'till the whole is leavened,' as less than a prophecy of a final complete triumph of the gospel in that it will diffuse itself through all nations, and purify and ennoble all life." The Bible speaks in world terms from Genesis to Revelation. Jehovah is no tribal deity, but is "the God of the whole earth" (Isaiah 54: 5). Redemption had in view no little select class or favored few, but "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him

should not perish, but have eternal life." The gospel was no bit of local news circulating around in Jewish villages, but is a world message. Jesus Christ was no parochial schoolmaster, but is the Prophet of humanity. The kingdom of God, according to abundant and continuous testimony of Scripture, is to fill the earth "from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth" (Zech. 9: 10).

4. *A Slow and Long Growth.* Growth is by its nature a slow process, standing in contrast with a sudden explosion. We cannot see a tree grow in a day, just as we cannot see the hour hand of a clock move in a second. Some trees grow so slowly that it takes them centuries to reach their maturity. The kingdom of God as a world organism is of still slower growth and after nineteen centuries it has made comparatively small progress in the world. The initial stages of growth may seem especially slow while the vital forces are relatively few and feeble, and at a later stage growth may proceed more rapidly when the organism has acquired more bulk and energy, as a snowball grows rapidly when its size is increased. We are yet in the early stages of the growth of the kingdom of God and we need not be discouraged or surprised at its seemingly slow progress.

Growth may be slow, but if it has a long life history it will reach maturity and fruitage. The kingdom of God has plenty of time ahead of it. There are indications in both nature and revelation that there is a long time in store for this world. Our ideas on this

point have undergone a Copernican revolution since the days when it was believed the world was only several thousand years old and when therefore it was natural to believe that it would end in another thousand, more or less. Geology and astronomy have lengthened these few thousand years out into many millions. Geologists now estimate the age of the earth at a hundred million years. Anthropologists have reached less agreement as to the antiquity of man on the earth, but few of them would consent to less than a hundred thousand years and most of their estimates are higher.[4] As to the future of the earth there is still greater uncertainty, but Professor Nathanael S. Shaler, of Harvard, estimated that both the earth and man will probably continue for another hundred million years.[5] The solar system is a very stable and long-enduring structure and will last millions of millenniums unless it is wrecked in a mighty collision with some other system or star, a barely possible and vastly remote event. Whatever we may think of these calculations and speculations, they have made it necessary for us to adapt our theories on all subjects, including our theology, to very long periods of time. This planet is a ship stocked for a long voyage and it slips along in a deep smooth sea in which there are no storms and few rocks. Humanity has already been on this earth a much longer time than our fathers thought, and there is much evidence that it will be here vastly longer than the Jews

[4] See H. F. Osborn, *Men of the Old Stone Age.*
[5] *Man and the Earth*, p. 215.

and early Christians, with their eschatology that doomed the earth to destruction in a few years, dreamed.

This scientific view of the age of the earth is the background against which we must now read and interpret Scripture teaching; and we may expect to find that it will revolutionize our view of Scripture at points, just as has been done by astronomy and geology. For when we come to look at it, we find in the Scriptures clear intimations and indications that the second coming of Christ with the end of the world is yet a long way off. It takes thirty centuries for a giant Redwood to push its top up three hundred feet towards the sun, and the mustard-seed in the parable represents a tree that will overspread the world and shelter the nations in its branches, and the growth of such a tree may take hundreds and even thousands of millenniums. The parable of the Leaven intimates a long time, for it will take millenniums for the gospel to leaven the whole mass of humanity. In the parable of the Talents "after a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and maketh a reckoning with them" (Matt. 25: 19); and while this "long time" was included in a human lifetime, yet it was a long time relatively to a human life, and in the same way the time of the delay of Christ's coming may be a relatively large part of the life of humanity, and therefore an immeasurably long time. And, most convincing of all, the great commission (Matt. 28: 18–20) bids us make disciples of all nations and baptize them, and

this will necessarily consume time that will be measured by millenniums. Peter had some glimpse of the long duration of divine time when he declared that "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (II Pet. 3:8).

This world is only in the morning of its day and humanity is only in its infancy. Vast vistas of time stretch out before it in which our world will develop its resources and man will grow into maturity. All our achievements, industry and invention, science and art, education and social progress, liberty and brotherhood, ethics and religion, are only in their bud and will yet put forth their full bloom and ripened fruit. Even now world unity is looming up on the horizon and will be achieved to-morrow; and then the path will just be cleared for unified and speeded-up human progress. All that has been done will presently be better done, and the light of to-day will grow pale and be lost in the mid-day splendor of to-morrow. "The best is yet to be, the last of life, for which the first was made." The kingdom of God has all this time and all the time God has for its full growth and final harvest. God has a long calendar and his hours and years are the pendulum beats of the clock of eternity. We have good grounds, then, for believing that the end of the world, with its attendant events of the second coming of Christ, the general resurrection and the final judgment, is yet a very remote event. This fact bears decisively on the problem we have in hand.

5. *A Gradual Growth attended with Catastrophic*

Crises. Growth is always a gradual process, and yet it is often attended with crises which seem sudden and catastrophic, though the principle of continuity is never really broken. Nature is full of cataclysms in continuous processes. A meteor travels invisibly through millions of miles, gathering momentum, when it suddenly strikes the earth's atmosphere and in the twinkling of an eye burns up in a flash of splendor. The earth lies solid and still under the landscape, teeming with populations and cities, for centuries and then suddenly rocks its crust and splits open in an earthquake, creating wide ruin and swallowing up thousands of lives. A mountain may sleep for a millennium and never be suspected of being a dormant volcano, and then it blows its head off and pours forth clouds and floods of ashes and lava, burying cities that may be forgotten for centuries.

Growth itself is attended with crises. Some plants grow for years and then suddenly burst into bloom, and every flowering time of a plant is a crisis in its life. Grain grows through months and then suddenly ripens for the harvest, which is the crisis of the wheatfield. The metamorphoses of insects are marvelous crises. The slow-crawling, shaggy and repulsive caterpillar passes into the chrysalis state in which it is torn down and rebuilt, and then it suddenly emerges as a swift-winged, gorgeously painted and bejeweled butterfly, one of the most beautiful creatures in the world. Our human life is also attended with crises at its deliverance from the womb in birth and at vari-

ous climacterics at puberty and at other critical periods of life, and finally it passes through the great crisis of death. The history of families, institutions, cities and nations is attended with crises. The family circle after years of permanence is suddenly broken, institutions grow and decline, cities come and go, empires rise and fall, war may break in upon a nation's life with the suddenness and destructiveness of an earthquake or volcanic explosion; and such a crisis as the present great war may work greater sudden changes in a few years than the slow progress of a hundred or a thousand years. Yet all of these crises and revolutions are the outgrowth and product of evolution and never break the principle of continuity.

It is, then, quite in accordance with this law of nature and of human life that the kingdom of God, while it is a long and gradual growth, should yet be attended with cataclysmic crises. In its early stages it passed through crises when Abraham went forth out of idolatrous Mesopotamia into Palestine, when his descendants went down into Egypt, when Moses led them out of that country to the promised land, when the monarchy was set up at Jerusalem, when Israel went into captivity in Babylon, and when it returned from the exile to Jerusalem. It passed through a great crisis when Christ came, and his death and resurrection and ascension were critical points in his mission. The day of Pentecost was a catastrophic event in the kingdom that gave it a powerful impulse. The destruction of Jerusalem was a catastrophe that fulfilled a

crisis foretold by Jesus himself. It was a crisis in the history of Christianity when Paul set out on his first missionary journey, and it was a tremendous crisis when the apostles met in their first general council at Jerusalem (Acts 11) and settled the question as to whether the Gentiles were to be admitted to the Christian church, and a little later at a second council (Acts 15) [6] settled the question as to whether the ceremonial law of Moses was to be imposed on Gentile converts, and thereby determined whether Christianity was to be a Jewish sect or a world religion. Other crises have occurred down through the centuries. The conversion of the Roman Empire was an epochal event, and the Reformation was a tremendous upheaval and crisis. The present great war may be viewed as a colossal catastrophe and crisis in the history of the kingdom of God, for it is a gigantic scythe and plow to cut down and root up the poisonous weeds of military despotism in order that the good grain of the kingdom, its liberty and justice and brotherhood, may grow.

While these crises are interruptive of the existing order and some of them are sudden and violent, yet they all are evolutions out of previous conditions and causes and are culminations of continuous and converging forces and events. The kingdom of God has followed and will follow this general law of gradual yet catastrophic growth from its first inception in this world to its climax in the final events that will issue in the eternal state.

[6] McGiffert, *The Apostolic Age*, pp. 101 ff., 192 ff.

6. *Place of the Second Coming of Christ in this Catastrophic Growth.* The second coming of Christ is in line with these crises and is the final catastrophic event in the earthly history of the kingdom of God. In the parable of the Tares Jesus said, "The harvest is the end of the world"; and in the Draw-net he said: "So shall it be in the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the righteous, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 13:49–50). This plainly marks the second or final coming of Christ with the angels and the general judgment. "The end of the world" or of "the age" or of this dispensation always denotes the culmination and completion of the kingdom when the great commission shall have been fulfilled and all nations shall have been discipled and baptized and taught to do all that Christ commanded (Matt. 28:18–20). After this fulfillment there is no room or need in Scripture or in the nature of the kingdom for any further growth of the kingdom of heaven in this world, for its harvest is ripened, and "the harvest is the end of the world." Christ's work on earth is done. "Then cometh the end, when he shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father" (I Cor. 15:24).

CHAPTER VI

THE KINGDOM OF GOD: MEANS OF ITS ESTABLISHMENT

GROWTH in the lower forms of life takes care of itself, but in the higher forms it calls for care and control. Weeds grow wild, but wheat must be cultivated. A baby left to itself would not long survive. Education is a process of nourished and stimulated and controlled growth. Spiritual life is the highest form of life and calls for the greatest care and effort in the use of the proper means for its development. The kingdom of God is not a wild-growing plant out in the wilderness of the world, but it is "a tree planted by the streams of water" (Ps. 1:3). What are the means by which it is established?

1. *Not by Worldly Means.* Negatively, we have seen that the kingdom of God is not a worldly kingdom in its substance and spirit and therefore it cannot be established by worldly means. Worldly empires have been built by the sword on human bones and blood, but the world has had enough of these and is now putting an end to them and is determined to have no more. The Jews passionately desired and dreamed of such a kingdom. Their whole history and hope culminated in this consuming ambition. It saturated

their literature and life. It was in the air and there was no escaping it. To deny or doubt it was nothing less than treason to be visited with social ostracism and political hatred and death. They looked and longed for a Messiah who would come as a conqueror and crush their enemies and set up his kingdom at Jerusalem and from thence rule the world.

The premillenarians look for the same kind of kingdom set up at the same place and by the same means. An outburst of supernatural power is to effect what the gospel has failed to do. This idea is very prominent in their theory and a few quotations out of countless such passages scattered all through their books will show this. "Thank God the spot is located. 'They shall stand on Mount Zion'; and when he comes, not the Czar of Russia only, but every king shall fall down before him, and all nations shall serve him."[1] "The destruction of the beast and the kings of the earth is God's picture of the destruction of the world power leader termed the Antichrist and the leader of a great system of false religion who will be his supreme ally."[2] "During the kingdom age, when Jesus Christ is reigning here, he will not suffer even the beasts to tear each other."[3] "The church or saints, having been caught up in Rapture, come with Christ to execute judgment upon the world of living nations. . . . He separates the sheep from the goats,

[1] W. B. Riley in Report of Prophetic Conference of 1914, p. 109. Also see his *Evolution of the Kingdom*, p. 187.
[2] R. M. Russell, ibid., p. 61.
[3] C. I. Scofield, ibid., p. 46.

gathering out all things that doth offend, and sets up his kingdom." [4] "Not only will Satan and his chosen instruments be abolished, but the wickedness of the wicked shall come to an end, and the earth be filled with righteousness and peace. . . . Open wickedness shall be suppressed under the reign of Christ and his saints." [5] "The supernatural is held in abeyance as to its outward manifestation until the time arrives for the restoration of the forfeited blessing, the personal dwelling of God with man, which will be experienced in his kingdom. When Jesus, of supernatural origin and glorified by supernatural power, shall come the second time unto salvation, his supernatural might shall be exerted in behalf of this kingdom in the most astounding manner." [6] "The present war is not the prophetic Armageddon; the theater of that conflict will not center around Berlin, London, Paris, Petrograd, or Constantinople, but Jerusalem. . . . Angels will be scouting about the ramparts; resurrected saints will form the battalions for action around the Holy City. The artillery will be the fire of divine wrath, proceeding from the presence of him who comes to wrest the scepter of universal empire from the usurper Prince; and his presence will consume, as it were, the allied nations and their Leader." [7]

These illustrative quotations show how closely the

[4] Blackstone, *Jesus Is Coming*, p. 104.
[5] A. B. Simpson, *The Coming One*, p. 156.
[6] G. N. H. Peters, *The Theocratic Kingdom*, p. 81.
[7] C. F. Wimberly, *Behold the Morning!* pp. 156–157.

Jewish ideas of the first coming of the Messiah are reduplicated by the premillenarian ideas of the second coming of Christ and how identical are the Jewish and the premillenarian means to be used in establishing his kingdom.

So thought the Jews in Christ's day. And let us not think that this thought never suggested itself to Jesus himself. He was a Jew and was bred in the patriotism of his people. The sword was the ready instrument of every empire builder of his time. Why should he not use it and cut a short path to his kingdom? This question must have visited his mind. This, we take it, was the fundamental meaning of his temptation in the wilderness. Immediately after his baptism he was seized with the mighty consciousness of his divine sonship and supernatural power, and he was led of the Spirit into the wilderness that he might settle once for all how he was going to use this power, whether selfishly for his own comfort and aggrandizement, or in service and sacrifice for the world, whether he would take a short cut to the kingdom or whether he would go the slow and painful way of the cross. Would he create bread out of stones and thereby use his power for his self-gratification? Would he leap from the pinnacle of the temple and by a sensational stroke and spectacular display instantly gain popular applause and prestige? These suggestions of the tempter pressed upon him with plausible fascination and force but they were summarily vanquished.

"Again, the devil taketh him unto an exceeding

high mountain, and showeth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and he saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me" (Matt. 4:8–9). What does this mean but that Jesus was tempted to use the devil's means and methods of getting the kingdom by a short quick stroke, cutting his path to it with the sword or by any worldly instrument, instead of traveling the long and toilsome path of the cross? And what was the outcome of this plausible and powerful temptation? "Then said Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. Then the devil leaveth him; and behold, angels came and ministered unto him." And so Jesus Christ settled for himself and once for all that he would not use worldly means to establish his kingdom, and he came forth from this temptation calm and strong to go the way of service and sacrifice unto death.

When, therefore, Jesus began his ministry there was never any uncertainty in his teaching on this point. He never lent the least color of encouragement to the Jews in their hope of a worldly kingdom but put his foot squarely down upon it. He constantly endeavored to uproot it out of the minds of his disciples, though they never got rid of it and time and again it broke through their lips out of their hearts where it was always secretly cherished. On one occasion Jesus perceived "that they were about to come and take him by force, to make him king," a self-contradictory con-

ception and an impossible thing for them or for any physical power to do; and he "withdrew again into the mountain himself alone" (John 6:15).

In his teaching he was explicit on this matter. "My kingdom," he said, "is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence" (John 18:36). Jesus Christ was not another conqueror come to subdue the world by force. He was not in the same line and class with Alexander and Cæsar and Napoleon and the Kaiser. He was not of the same temper and spirit as Mohammed. His is a kingdom reared within on the throne of the heart, and the sword, however it may compel the outward obedience of the body, cannot compel or win the inward loyalty and love of the soul. The ancient prophets were not without light on this point. The word of Jehovah came unto Zerubbabel, saying, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith Jehovah of hosts" (Zech. 4:6). Spiritual means are necessary to build a spiritual kingdom. In the light of such teaching the ancient Jewish and modern premillenarian hope of a kingdom of God established by physical power is as unscriptural as it is unethical and unpsychological. Such an earthly root can never yield a heavenly kingdom.

And yet truth is many-sided and complex, and we often have to seem to contradict ourselves several times, as Ruskin said, in order to express any truth fully. The sword has a place in the business of build-

ing the kingdom of God in the world. Jesus himself said so. On one occasion he said to his disciples, "And he that hath none, let him sell his cloak, and buy a sword" (Luke 22:36). "I came not to send peace," he said, "but a sword" (Matt. 10:34). Jesus was no effeminate man, with drooping figure, pale face, long hair, dreamy and wistful eyes and a sweet and clinging disposition, as the painters have portrayed him. He was no pacifist, as some have claimed, with milk and water in his veins, and no spinal column that would stand up against an enemy. On the contrary, he was a red-blooded, straight-statured, strong-vertebrated man, who was so calm and brave that when the soldiers came to arrest him in the garden of Gethsemane and he went out before them they went backward and fell upon the ground. His lips did not always drop dew and honey, but they also spoke poniards and every syllable was a stab. Out of his mouth issued lightning and thunder to scorch and smite hypocritical church members and doctors of divinity. On one occasion he seized a whip of cords, a policeman's mace, and drove thieves and robbers out of the temple, a plain use of physical force.

The sword with other forms of physical force, then, has a place in the work of the kingdom. "My sword shall be bathed in heaven" (Isaiah 34:5). Yet this place is not primary but only secondary and incidental. It can only clear a way for the kingdom but cannot create the kingdom itself. It can execute judgment but cannot give mercy. It can kill but cannot convert.

It can slay an enemy but cannot win a friend: only truth and love can do that. So the sword has ever had a place in clearing the world of injustice and oppression and thereby opening the way for the coming of the kingdom of God, but we must never mistake this preparatory means for a primary power. The sword never could create a kingdom of brotherhood and love, even though it were wielded by the omnipotent hand of Christ coming in the clouds in glory and though its brightness flashed from the East even unto the West.

2. *The Truth and Grace of the Gospel.* By its very nature the kingdom of God, as an inner spiritual state, can be induced in the individual soul and extended through society only by mental and affectional means, human and divine; and such means are truth and grace. All through the Scriptures these are indicated as the means for establishing the kingdom. "Thou desirest truth in the inward parts" (Ps. 51:6). "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith Jehovah of hosts" (Zech. 4:6). "For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). This truth and grace are embodied in the gospel, which is the great human means of converting the world.

This raises the question, What is the gospel for and why is it preached? The premillenarians give an astonishing answer to this question. They say that the gospel is not intended and is not preached in order to convert the world, but that it is preached only as a

witness to warn the world and to gather out of it the bride of Christ; and that under the preaching of the gospel the world is growing and will grow worse and worse until Christ comes to cut its wickedness short in judgment and set up his kingdom when "his supernatural might shall be exerted in behalf of this kingdom in the most astonishing manner." Postmillenarianism reverses this order and holds that the world will be Christianized by the present means of extending the kingdom of God and that then Christ will come and bring the world to an end and inaugurate the eternal kingdom. This is the decisive point of difference between these two theories, and by this point they stand or fall.

The premillenarian doctrine will be shown by a few typical quotations. "Gigantic is the misconception," exclaims Nathaniel West, "to dream that God has given the church, unable to reform herself, to build the Christian state up to the kingdom of Christ, or to reform the world. God's wisdom is not so foolish. . . . The conversion of the world to Christ is *not in this present time!* . . . More and more the Christian state is a tool of Satan."[8] "It is Christ's coming," says Seiss, "that is to make the millennium, and not the millennium which is to prepare the world for Christ's coming. . . . The Holy Scriptures, so far from promising to us a millennium of universal righteousness before Christ comes, universally represent the world as *abounding*, if not *ever growing*, in wick-

[8] *The Thousand Years in Both Testaments*, pp. 448, 449, 456.

edness, even up to the very moment of his coming. . . . People think they see signs of promise in the movements of reform. They think to give the church a better shape, and the state a better government, and the world a freer Bible, and that thus the millennium will come. I have no confidence in any such hopes. I see more of promise in the darkest features of the times than in all these pious and patriotic dreams. . . . Skeptics in the church, and skeptics out of the church, are rising up to pronounce all our boasted efforts a failure." [9] "While rejecting," writes Peters, "the Whitbyan theory of a future conversion of the world *previous* to the second advent of Jesus as unscriptural and misleading, we at the same time hold to a future blessed conversion of the Jews and Gentiles *after* the second advent, as plainly taught in the Word." [10] "They are without warrant in the Word," says Tyng, "who are looking for the conversion of the world by the preaching of the cross and the extending influence of the church. In no portion of the Scripture is such a hope justified. All that the gospel was designed to accomplish was less than this." [11] "Nowhere," claims A. J. Gordon, "is universal redemption predicted as the result of preaching the gospel in this dispensation." [12] He admits "the kingdom of heaven becomes a lofty and overshadowing world-church," but thinks the birds attracted to it are unclean, and that the leaven

[9] *The Last Times,* pp. 40, 42, 299–300.
[10] *The Theocratic Kingdom,* vol. III, p. 210.
[11] *He Will Come,* p. 144.
[12] *Ecce Venit,* p. 47.

is "a type of corruption." "Christ's kingdom," writes Ford C. Ottman, "shall be established, not as men vainly imagine by the preaching of the gospel, but by the iron rod that shall smite down all opposition and make the enemies of Christ like the broken pieces of a potter's vessel." [13] "This wicked world," says Blackstone, "which is so radically opposed to God, and under the present control of his arch enemy, is not growing better. On the contrary, judgment, fire, and perdition are before it. Perilous times are coming. . . . There is no hope, then, for the world, but in the coming of Christ the king." [14] "To-day the church at large looks for the recovery of this earth and this human race by means which nowhere in God's Word can be found appointed to that end." [15]

Let us now go to the New Testament and especially to the teaching of Jesus to find out why the gospel is preached. We have already seen the teaching set forth in the parables of the kingdom (Matt. 13) in which "the field is the world," and the leaven was "hid in three measures of meal, till it was all leavened," and the mustard-seed became a far-spreading tree that sheltered the birds of heaven. Christ's grand statement of the purpose and plan of redemption (John 3: 16) according to which "God so loved the world" "that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life" implies world salvation through

[13] *The Unfolding of the Ages*, pp. 65–66.
[14] *Jesus Is Coming*, pp. 148–149.
[15] H. M. Parsons in Report of New York Prophetic Conference of 1878, p. 220.

the preaching of the gospel; and of the same implication are many other of his statements, such as "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12), "For the bread of God is that which cometh down out of heaven, and giveth life unto the world" (John 6:33), and "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself" (John 12:32). As we have already seen, Jesus was always thinking and speaking in world terms and there is a splendid universalism in his gospel which shines upon all its pages.

But there are two statements of Jesus that are expressly to the point. In Matt. 24:14 in his great eschatological discourse he said, "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a testimony unto all the nations; and then shall the end come." The premillenarians seize upon this text with great avidity as proving their doctrine, for they say that this proves that the gospel is to be preached only "for a witness" or "for a testimony," and therefore is not to convert the nations. The phrase "for a testimony" may in itself be indecisive as to the purpose and effect of such preaching, and if this were all that Jesus had said on the subject we might be left in doubt as to this point. But this is not all he said, and we must go to the much fuller and perfectly explicit declaration he made of the purpose of preaching the gospel in his great commission to his disciples: "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father

and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28: 18–20).[16] These are probably the sublimest words that ever fell from human lips. They are an utterance either of divine foresight and foreordination, or else of deluded human fanaticism and folly. They are more daring and revolutionary than any decree that ever issued from emperor or council of state, and for nineteen centuries they have been shaping the religious and ethical history of the world. It is important that we note for our purpose every part and particle of this great commission.

(1) "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth." All authority includes all power of every kind that is applicable to this task. Jesus Christ can never have any more power than he has now, for he now has all there is. Premillenarians put their confidence in some "rod of iron" with which Christ will "smite down all opposition" when he

[16] There is no question as to the integrity of the Greek text of this passage. It is not necessary in this discussion to go into the tangled problem of the original forms and mutual relations of the gospels. If it were granted that the baptismal formula, "into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," in the great commission may indicate a later addition to or development of its original form, this would not impair its trustworthiness as embodying the true substance of the teaching of Jesus. The reader will find the matter discussed in Meyer's *Commentary*, *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, and *The International Critical Commentary*. See especially Zahn's *Introduction to the New Testament*, vol. II, p. 591.

comes, but Christ now has omnipotence and has pledged it to the present work of preaching the gospel for the conversion of the world.

(2) "Go ye therefore." This seems like strange logic. We might have thought that as Christ already has all power he would at once do this work of converting the world himself. But this is not his plan. Christ never does anything he can get his disciples to do for him. Divine power takes to human hands and feet. Christ energizes in Christians. Christ's power is the steam in the boiler, and human agency is the cylinder in which it operates; his power is the heavenly reservoir of grace, and his disciples are the channels through which it pours out upon the world; his power is the omnipotent dynamo, and they are the conductors along which its spiritual electricity flashes around the earth.

(3) "And make disciples of." The word is a strong one and means converting into disciples. It is not equivalent to "preaching" or "evangelizing," but it describes the results of such evangelizing in actual conversion. The favorite word of premillenarians to designate the work of preaching the gospel is "evangelizing," by which they mean "bringing the good news" of the gospel, as the Greek word literally means. But the word translated "make disciples of" will not admit of being bleached into this colorless and weak meaning. The two words are accurately used and brought into contrast in Acts 14:21, where we read of Paul and Barnabas, who were then at Derbe:

"And when they had preached the gospel in that city, and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra." Here the word translated "preached" (εὐαγγελισάμενοί) is literally "evangelized." Paul and Barnabas, however, did not stop with "evangelizing" the city, after the manner of premillenarian theory and practice, but they "made many disciples," the same Greek word (μαθητεύσαντες) being used that is used in the great commission. We thus have in this commission express and inescapable teaching that the gospel is preached not simply for "evangelizing" or "for a witness," but for the deeper work of conversion.

(4) "All the nations." This comprehensive phrase cannot be narrowed to the nations known to the disciples, Judea and the neighboring islands and shores of the Mediterranean, but must be given its full worldwide sweep. On a later occasion Christ told the disciples they were to be witnesses "unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). These nations are to be converted into Christian disciples, and this work is not done but only begun when they are "evangelized," or simply had the gospel preached to them. Jesus here speaks in world terms, here is the splendid universality of his gospel, and it is pitiful to see Christian interpreters trying to confine and cabin its unrestricted breadth in the interest of a theory. Some premillenarians would have it that this command means to "make disciples out of all nations," but this translation will not stand for a moment in the light of the Greek original.

(5) "Baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." This is further proof that this "discipling of all nations" is no superficial announcement of the gospel, but goes to the root of the heart in conversion. Baptism is an outward sign of conversion and it signifies entrance into the Spirit and fellowship of Christ. It also stands for church membership and entrance upon the organized activities of the church.

(6) "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you." Hearing is to be translated into doing, profession into practice, creed into conduct and character, and duty into deeds. This is the living gospel which is printed in human spirit and speech and bound up in flesh and blood; this is the gospel of reality that is alive and alert and active, the gospel that is read and known of all men; the gospel that the world sees and feels and to which it pays the homage of its respect and reverence. This is Christ reduplicated in Christians and multiplied in the world. This is the final end of the gospel, the fruit of the Spirit; this is the gospel that is the power of God unto salvation, this is salvation itself; and this is the kingdom of God in the world.

(7) "And lo, I am with you." This is the pledge of Christ to his disciples that he is not sending them to accomplish this tremendous world task in their own name and strength; but he goes with them to encourage and support and inspire and energize them. If they are faithful they cannot fail unless he fails; he will

not fail, and therefore they cannot fail. And he speaks to his disciples in the present tense: "I am," not "I will be" with you. Premillenarians say that Christ the King is absent and tell us what great things he will do when he comes again. But Christ himself assures us he is present and is even now with us in our work.

(8) "Always, even unto the end of the world." The work is as great and will be as long as all the ages of the world. This is no short program that may be accomplished in a few years, but it reaches through the centuries and will go on to the end of time. But however long it may be, Christ's presence will never be withdrawn and his power will never run short, "even unto the end of the world."

Thus the great commission is buttressed before and after with the power and the presence of Christ. "All authority" and "I am with you" are the two abutments on which this mighty arch of the conversion of the world rests and is impregnably supported. The gates of hell cannot prevail against such a structure and it shall stand until time will be no more.

This is the great commission of the risen Christ himself and almost his last utterance in this world and message to his disciples and to all his followers to the end of time. Its point and purpose cannot be evaded by the premillenarian device of saying that it is only a program and not a promise and pledge of its fulfillment. This is to reduce the words of Christ to a verbal quibble and turn his program into a pretense.

He meant his disciples to do what he sent them to do; and he sent them on no visionary and quixotic errand but on an entirely practicable mission as well as on the most tremendous piece of business that was ever committed to men in this world. This is the divine program of Christianity, and it has been the working plan and power, the marching orders, the vision and inspiration, the prayer and song of the Christian church from Pentecost to this hour. Reduce this great commission to the premillenarian program of preaching the gospel as a witness to a world that is to grow worse and worse until it plunges into its doom in destruction, is to emasculate the gospel of Christ and wither it into pitiful impotency. This is to send the gospel out into the world as a futile thing, foreordained to failure from the start. No, the gospel is the power of God unto salvation, and Jesus Christ, marching in the greatness of his strength, sends us on no empty errand of uttering a message that will die away in the air of an unheeding and hostile world, gathering only a few out of its innumerable multitudes and consigning the vast majority to destruction, but he sends us to " make disciples of all the nations " and thereby win the world itself to the God and Father of all men who loved the world and gave his Son for it.

It is remarkable how premillenarian writers keep away from the great commission. They seem to suspect that it contains some hidden danger or is loaded with dynamite for their doctrine, as, indeed, it is. Dr. David Brown's *Second Advent* contains in the " Index

of Texts" nine references to this passage. Dr. Horatius Bonar's *Coming and Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ,* "Being an Examination of the Work of the Rev. D. Brown on the Second Coming of the Lord," contains in its "Index" a reference to Matt. 24: 14 (preaching the gospel "for a testimony"), but not one to Matt. 28: 18–20, stopping his numerous quotations from Matthew at chapter 26: 24. How could Dr. Bonar write "an examination" of Dr. Brown's book and never once refer to one of the main passages on which Dr. Brown founds his doctrine?

In the "Textual Index" of *Premillennial Essays,* being the Report of the New York Prophetic Conference of 1878, there are sixty-eight references to the Gospel of Matthew, seven of them being to chapter 24: 14, but the references stop with chapter 26: 64 and there is not one to chapter 28: 18–20. That a large number of Christian ministers should meet and discuss for three days the mission and coming of Christ and not leave in their published proceedings a single allusion to the great commission of Christ himself is certainly an extraordinary performance and could hardly have been done without conscious purpose. The essay in this volume devoted to the Scriptural proof of the premillennial coming of Christ was prepared and read by Dr. S. H. Kellogg, then Professor of Systematic Theology in the Western Theological Seminary of Pittsburgh, Pa. Dr. Kellogg discusses many texts bearing on his subject but makes no allusion to Matt. 28: 18–20. However, he did not overlook Matt.

24: 14, for on page 56 we find this interesting passage: "But some may ask, is it possible that the preaching should go on until mankind, in an age to come, should be numbered among the people of God? This question is explicitly answered in the other passage, where, according to the usual understanding, the object of the present ministration of the gospel is formally stated, viz.: Matt. 24: 14, where we read: 'This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world,' not for its conversion. Why did not the Lord say so if that were indeed the object? —'but for a witness unto all nations — and then '— without waiting for the general conversion of the nations —'then shall the end come, all nations must hear, and then shall the end come.'" "Why did not the Lord say so if" the conversion of the world "were indeed the object?" Dear Professor, whose memory we cherish as one of our most brilliant teachers, the Lord did say so, only you stopped reading your Bible before you came to the place where he said it. There is another passage in Matthew, where, "according to the usual understanding, the object of the present ministration of the gospel is formally stated, viz.:" not "Matt. 24: 14" but Matt. 28: 18–20.

These "prophetic conferences" in general seem to have little interest in this prophecy of Christ himself. We have gone through the official reports of five of them and have found no discussion of and hardly any allusion to it. In the Report of the Chicago Conference of 1886 we came upon an address on "Millen-

nial Motives to Evangelization," by Rev. Dr. Arthur T. Pierson. We thought on taking up this address, "Surely we shall find the great commission here." But it is not there. Though the address extends to fourteen columns of fine print, yet there is not room in it for the great commission. Though it enumerates six "Millennial Motives to Evangelization," yet the conversion of the world is not one of them. It quotes Mark 16:15, but not Matt. 28:19. It skirts very close to this important verse, quoting the closing words of verse 20, but it carefully refrains from quoting, "make disciples of all the nations." Why is this? Because almost the entire argument is devoted to trying to prove the pessimistic proposition that the gospel cannot convert the world, which is all the while growing worse and more hopeless, and the simple quotation of Christ's own words in Matt. 28:19 would have knocked the bottom out of the whole dreary and depressing address. It is desperately hard to give "motives" for something which cannot be done.[17]

As these pages are being written there comes to hand, fresh from the press, Rev. Dr. J. Stuart Holden's *Will the Christ Return?* He makes no reference to Matt. 28:18–20, but quotes Matt. 24:14 and says,

[17] As we write we have received the report of the Philadelphia prophetic conference of 1918. Its speakers know and build on Matt. 24:14, but apparently do not know or at least never refer to Matt. 28:18–20, not even in the address on "Has God a Program?" How could they use or even quote the great commission when one of their speakers declared, "We are not here to win the world to Christ. We are here to get a bride for God's Son" (p. 112).

"Christ did not say that the whole world is to be converted before he comes. . . . He merely declares that the Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached throughout the world for a witness" (page 37). It would be hard to justify the use of the word "merely" in this connection.

We give one more instance of this remarkable premillenarian antipathy to the great commission which runs through this literature, for we have examined many volumes of it and found few allusions to this passage. We turn to the "Textual Index" of *Jesus Is Coming* and we find "Matt. 28: 19, p. 243." Turning to this page we read this: "For this is our Lord's command: 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature' (Matt. 28: 19)." This passage is not Matt. 28: 19 at all, but Mark 16: 15.[18] Apparently the pen of the author of *Jesus Is Coming* is so little used or so averse to writing down the great commission in its full form that even when he means to quote it he quotes something else. While Matt. 24: 14 is quoted in full six times in the book, yet Matt. 28: 19-20 is not once quoted in full and only fragments of it are given twice in footnotes, with no discussion or explanation of it at all.

The only serious attempt we have found in a premillenarian author to discuss this passage is in Peters' *Theocratic Kingdom,* vol. III, pp. 191–192. Though

[18] This short form of the great commission is found in the appendix to Mark, which is of doubtful genuineness, as is indicated in the Revised Version in a footnote and by being separated by a wider space from the authentic text.

this work extends to three huge volumes and 2175 pages, yet the discussion of the great commission is relegated to a footnote and three lines of text. The text says that Matt. 28: 19 "is supposed by many to embrace the conversion of the world. But it says *nothing* of such conversion; only enjoining *tne duty of preaching the gospel*": this in the face of the command to "make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them." In the note appended to the text, the author charges Dr. Brown with taking *"an unwarranted liberty* with Matt. 28: 19, reading: 'Go ye, therefore, and make disciples of all nations'" (which has since been adopted by the Revised Version), and claims that the command should be limited to "making disciples out of all nations," a translation which the Greek will not bear and which illustrates a method of forcing texts to say something they do not say which is unhappily all too frequent in the literature of premillenarianism.

We must leave without further illustrations or comment the strange silence or peculiar treatment which premillenarian writers accord to our Lord's great commission.

It is true that "all the nations" have not yet been discipled and baptized, but neither has the gospel yet been "preached in the whole world for a testimony," yet this command is in process of fulfillment and "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." As long as the great commission of our Lord stands written in the New Testament

premillenarianism is confronted with an insurmountable rock.

3. *The Work of the Church.* The apostles immediately went to work to carry out Christ's great commission in the conversion of the world. On the day of Pentecost Peter preached the gospel with no thought that he was simply bearing witness but with the tremendously earnest and practical purpose of converting the people, calling upon them, "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins" (Acts 2:38); and so effective was the message that three thousand souls were added to the church the first day.

The apostles then scattered and went everywhere preaching the gospel of salvation. Peter fell in with Gentiles and had his eyes opened to the wider mission of the gospel, and Paul boldly cut loose from the Jews and struck out into the great Gentile world, crossing over into Europe and driving the wedge of the gospel into the Roman Empire. And what was the purpose of these men in their preaching and missionary enterprises? Paul tells us in his Epistle to the Romans: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16). In the first letter he wrote he reminded his Thessalonian readers "how that our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance" (I Thess. 1:5); and writing later to the Ephesians he speaks of them as "having heard the

word of the truth, the gospel of your salvation" (Eph. 1:13). The last word we hear from Paul, from his prison house in Rome, was his declaration, "Be it known therefore unto you, that this salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles: they will also hear" (Acts 28:28); and he expected that in time the Gentile world would be saved: "until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in" (Rom. 11:25). When the risen Christ said to his disciples, "Ye shall be my witnesses" (Acts 1:8), the kind of witnessing they were to do was exemplified in their preaching salvation on the day of Pentecost; and when we read, "And with great power gave the apostles their witness of the resurrection," we next read the appropriate and intended result of such witness, "and great grace was upon them all" (Acts 4:33). The history of the Christian church as recorded in the New Testament, subsequent to Christ's giving his great commission to his disciples, shows that they understood his command to mean that they were to set about the great enterprise of converting the world, and they did this as far as was in their power in their day.

And this has been the mission and purpose of the church down through the centuries to this day. The preaching and teaching of the gospel in every place where its message is uttered, in pulpit and Sunday school and home, in Bible and book and Christian literature, is intended for and aimed at the one great object of enlightening and convincing and converting people unto repentance and faith and salvation. The

church has organized and is carrying on its worldwide, many-sided and enormous missionary enterprise with the same object in view. The idea that all this expenditure of men and money, service and sacrifice, faith and prayer, is simply to let the nations hear of the gospel "for a testimony" and to gather a few elect out of them, is far from exhausting or fulfilling the purpose of the church. If this premillenarian doctrine were generally and openly proclaimed as the real object of missionary work we believe the heart of the church would revolt against it. No, this idea does not fulfil the great commission, and it is not this that has drawn from the church its devotion in this service and inspired its great marching-songs and battle-cries, such as "Onward, Christian soldiers, marching as to war," "Like a mighty army moves the church of God," "We have Christ's own promise, and that cannot fail," and "On, then, Christian soldiers, on to victory!"

Among the many human agencies God employs for building his kingdom in the world the church stands first in preëminence and power. It is organized specially for this work and it has grown through these nineteen centuries into a mighty body, having many members that now cover the greater part of the earth. In spite of its divisions and strifes, weaknesses and even wickednesses, its unfaithfulness and feebleness, its failures and its follies, it is still "a mighty army" and has accomplished wonders. That its progress has been slow and has ever encountered difficulties and opposition and persecution is just what was predicted

by Christ himself. He had small success in his own ministry and endured persecution even unto the death of the cross, and he foretold to his disciples that they would have the same bitter experience. He did not place before them the prospect of a short program and promise them a quick and easy victory; on the contrary he enlisted them in an age-long warfare that would last until "the end of the world." He warned them of these things beforehand that they might have no disheartening disillusionments, but that they might have strength and peace in him and endure unto the end. "These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye may have peace. In the world ye have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

The church has ever been lured on and lifted up by the great vision of a redeemed world in the face of the slowness of the world to believe and of its opposition and persecution; and it ever has had and still has the undimmed faith and the unwearied faithfulness to wait while it works and to work while it waits.

4. *Providential Use of Secular Agencies.* God has not confined himself to distinctively religious and Christian agencies in building his kingdom in the world. "The earth is Jehovah's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein" (Ps. 24:1), and therefore all facts and forces are at his disposal in his works of providence and grace. Our whole expanding, progressive civilization, therefore, may be viewed as a means of extending his kingdom.

Though this civilization is not the kingdom itself, yet more and more as it is progressively Christianized will it be merged in the kingdom, and the two may finally become practically identical when "The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ" (Rev. 11:15).

Civil government, from this point of view, is an instrument of God for protecting and extending his kingdom (Rom. 13:1). Commerce is a powerful means of knitting the world into unity and brotherhood. All trains and ships are shuttles weaving the world into one web. Great inventions readily lend themselves to this service. The first book printed on the printing press was the Bible, and the press has been a powerful gospelizer to this day. Every inventor practically lays his magic machine at the feet of Jesus Christ as the wise men laid their gold and frankincense and myrrh at the feet of the infant Jesus. Steam and electricity are turning the wheels and flashing the currents of the world for him, railways are speeding their trains across the continents and steamships are plowing the seas for him, the airship spreads its wings for him, the sewing machine sews for him, the typewriter writes his messages, telephone and telegraph have enmeshed the globe in a network of wires that is the great nervous system of humanity and flashes everywhere his truth and grace, and wireless telegraphy shoots his messages through the ether around the earth. Even swords and guns and all our mighty modern engines of destruction, as we have already seen,

may fight for his kingdom and help to bring in its universal peace.

Our developing science and art are contributions to his kingdom. All truth is religious and comes from God, as all our light shoots from the sun. The kingdom of God is enthroned in the intelligence of the mind as well as in the loyalty of the heart and we are to love the Lord our God with all our mind. This means that we are to be open and hospitable to all truth from whatever source it comes and use it in unveiling God's glory and furthering his kingdom. So, also, all true art is religious, for it discloses the beauty of God. God is beautiful, and so he has built a beautiful world and is building a beautiful kingdom. There should be no unfriendliness between our science and our theology, and between our art and our worship. The beauty of the Lord our God should be upon us in all that we think with our minds and do with our hands.

The growing social sense of the world, leveling artificial and unjust distinctions and privileges, letting all men out into liberty and brotherhood, and earnestly endeavoring to build a social order that will give the means of a worthy and beautiful life to every human being, is a long step towards the kingdom of God on earth, a highway along which the redeemed shall come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads.

While these secular means are not in themselves the kingdom of God; while they may be and are used by

the forces of evil and have been prostituted to the wickedest ends; yet they are instruments in the hands of God and of Christians for carrying out the great commission of Christ, and they are mighty means of building the kingdom of God in the world.

5. *The Work of the Holy Spirit.* We have not yet reached the deepest and most vital means of establishing the kingdom of God in the world. Jesus himself unerringly pointed out and appointed this agency. In his last intimate interview with his disciples before the crucifixion he said unto them: "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter (or Helper), that he may be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth: whom the world cannot receive; for it beholdeth him not, neither knoweth him: ye know him; for he abideth with you, and shall be in you" (John 14:15–17). "But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said unto you" (26). "Nevertheless I tell you the truth: It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go, I will send him unto you. And he, when he is come, will convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go unto the Father, and ye behold me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world hath been judged. I have yet many things

to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth: for he shall not speak from himself; but what things soever he shall hear, these shall he speak: and he shall declare unto you the things that are to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall take of mine, and shall declare it unto you. All things whatsoever the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he taketh of mine, and shall declare it unto you" (John 16:7–15).

This is the complement of the great commission, the power by which that program is to be carried out. Here we notice, first of all, that Jesus boldly declared that it was better that he should leave the world in his bodily presence and send the Holy Spirit in his stead, and thereby he struck a fatal blow at one of the central doctrines of premillenarianism; for this theory holds that the bodily presence of Jesus in the world is necessary for the setting up of his kingdom; that never will the gospel convert the world until Christ comes and manifests his power "in the most astonishing manner"; that he will have his capital in Jerusalem where he will reign with his saints and from thence destroy his enemies, regather the Jews into Palestine, and then fulfill all the glowing prophecies of the Old Testament and the promises of the New as to the kingdom of God on earth. Destroy this theory and the central column of premillenarianism is thrown down, and Jesus destroyed it when he said it was better that he should leave this world.

The reason is plain. As the bodily presence of Jesus did not have any converting power in itself during his earthly ministry, so it would not have any such power if he were again on earth. Again and again must we hold on to the principle that the kingdom of God is an inner spiritual reality which cannot be created or induced by outward power. Again and ever again must we give heed to the voice that rings through the whole Bible, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith Jehovah of hosts." Conversion of the individual soul and of the world is a psychological and spiritual process and cannot be forced but must be induced by spiritual influences.

Not only so, but we can see that the bodily presence of Christ at Jerusalem or anywhere in the world would be a distraction and obstruction to the real growth of his kingdom. While on earth in his human ministry his miracles were a frequent danger to his mission as they created excitement and distracted the minds of the people from his true work, and time and again Jesus tried to keep them quietly in the background and bade the subjects of them to "tell no man." Now imagine Jesus at Jerusalem reigning in glory: what effect would this have on the world with all its means of swift communication and love of excitement? It would practically disorganize the world. Such events happening over there would make human life impossible over here. The world would be in a state of sensational excitement and turmoil that would be at the farthest remove from the true life of the kingdom,

and anything more distractive and destructive of the kingdom could not well be imagined. Jesus Christ never did a better thing for this world than when he left it and sent his Holy Spirit to take his place and carry on his work. And premillenarianism is flying in the face of his words and of the psychology of human nature and of the spiritual nature of the kingdom and of the social order of the world when it would bring him back to reign at Jerusalem.

The Scriptures everywhere make the Holy Spirit the immediate agent of God in his relation to the world. It was the Spirit that "moved upon the face of the waters" (Gen. 1:2) in creation, and thereby God is still immanent in the world of nature. In the beginning of his dealing with man "Jehovah said, My Spirit shall not strive with man forever" (Gen. 6:-3). The Psalmist prayed, "Take not thy holy Spirit from me" (Ps. 51:11). In the New Testament the Holy Spirit is the immediate agent in regeneration, repentance, faith and obedience. And Jesus said explicitly that the Spirit would convict the world in the work of saving it.

The great advantage of carrying on the work of converting the world by the Holy Spirit and not by the bodily presence of Christ is that this presence would necessarily be local and limited, but the Spirit is universal in the world. We are not to think of God as saving men and building his kingdom only in Christian lands or only where the historic gospel is known. The Scriptures expressly teach a wider redeeming work of

God in the world. In the Old Testament God is declared to be the "God of the whole earth," lighting every man's lamp (Job 20:27), and calling upon the ends of the earth to be saved (Isa. 45:22). More expressly still is this glorious truth declared in the opening of John's Gospel, where the universality of the work of Christ is clearly stated: "In him was life; and the life was the light of men. . . . There was the true light, even the light which lighteth every man, coming into the world" (John 1:4, 9). Peter encountered this truth in concrete form when he met Cornelius and with astonishment exclaimed, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to him" (Acts 10:35). Paul discovered the same truth as he found the men of Athens "very religious" and addressed them as "the offspring of God" (Acts 17:22, 29). The scales of narrow Jewish prejudice and dim vision fell from the eyes of these apostles as they saw the splendid breadth and brightness of the mercy of God in the world. The Bible is full of this spirit and it is one of its most glorious features.

Christ has left the world, then, in order that his bodily presence may not distract it and that the Holy Spirit may carry on the universal work of redemption. The truth and mercy of God as contained in the gospel is the chief means which the Holy Spirit uses in this work and which we are to use. It is in the person of the Spirit that Christ himself is in the world with all

men, and especially that he is fulfilling his part of the great commission expressed in the sublime claim, "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth," and in the magnificent promise, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

The various means and ways by which the kingdom comes are well summarized by Dr. A. A. Hodge as follows: "Thus this kingdom from the beginning and in the whole circle of human history has been always coming. Its coming has been marked by great epochs, when new revelations and new communications of divine power have been imported from without into the current of human history. The chiefest of these have been the giving of the law, the incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension and session of the King on the right hand of the Father, and the mission of the Holy Ghost. Yet the kingdom has been always coming every moment of all the years that have passed. In all the growing of the seeds and all the blowing of the winds; in every event, even the least significant, which has advanced the interests of the human family either in respect to their bodies or their souls, and thus made their lives better and worthier; in all the breaking of fetters; in all the bringing in of light; in the noiseless triumphs of peace; in the dying out of barbarisms; and in the colonization of great continents with new populations and free states,— the kingdom is coming. Above all, in the multiplication of the myriad centers of Christian missions and of the myriad hosts of Christian workers, each in the spirit of the King

seeking the very lowest and most degraded, everywhere lifting upward what Satan's kingdom has borne down, — the kingdom is coming. Its process is like that of the constructive power of the kingdom of nature, silent and invisible, yet omnipresent and omnipotent, like the rain and the dew and the zephyr and the sunlight. The kingdom comes intensively in each heart like the leaven, which penetrates the whole mass silently yet irresistibly until all is leavened. It comes extensively like the growth of the mustard-seed, which from the least beginnings unfolds itself until it shoots out great branches and shelters the fowls of heaven." [19]

6. *Conclusion as to the Kingdom of God.* We are now in a position to apply the doctrine of the kingdom of God to the theory of premillenarianism. We have shown from the Scriptures, as we believe, that the kingdom of God is an inner spiritual reality and social organism, now existing in the world, of slow and long growth, which is to fill the world and is being established by the truth and grace of the gospel as applied to the hearts of men by the Holy Spirit; and that the kingdom is thus to be fully established before Christ comes in his final advent to close the chapter of its earthly history and usher in its eternal state. This Scriptural doctrine of the kingdom plants a mountain range right across the path of premillenarianism. It utterly subverts the premillenarian doctrine of a kingdom that does not yet exist and is not to convert the world by the present ministration of the gospel, but is

[19] *Popular Lectures on Theological Themes,* pp. 296–297.

suddenly to be set up only when Christ comes in person to inaugurate it in Jerusalem with the pageantry and pomp of cosmic power. The correct concept of the kingdom thus gives the true solution of this problem, and it undermines the premillenarian and establishes the postmillenarian doctrine.

CHAPTER VII

THE COMING OF THE LORD

In all our reading and reasoning we are in danger of being misled by the fact that the same word may have two or more meanings, and we should be careful to determine the sense or senses in which a word is used. The word "come" in Scripture is a pivotal word in connection with our subject, and we must not think it always refers to the same thing. To a premillenarian it naturally suggests the second coming of Christ, and we have already seen that the simple presence of this word in a text of Scripture anywhere in the Bible is "confirmation strong as proofs of holy writ" that the text refers to this event. In this way some of these writers find even "the Old Testament saturated with second coming prophecies" and declare that "each and every verse in twenty-five makes direct or indirect reference to" it.

But this word, like nearly all words, is used in various senses and may refer to widely different events, and this is a vital point in our discussion. There are a number of senses in which the Lord comes. "Students of the Gospels," says A. B. Bruce, "not specially biassed in favor of orthodoxy, such as Holtz-

mann, have recognized three distinct comings: an *apocalyptic* coming at the end of the world, a *historical* coming at any great crisis, as in the destruction of the Jewish state, and a *dynamical* coming in the hearts of believers." [1] We shall give instances of these several kinds.

1. *The Coming of the Lord at Critical Points in History.* The fact is that God is coming at all points in history, for he is immanent in all creation and providence so that not a sparrow falls without his notice and the very hairs of our heads are numbered. Nevertheless there are critical points at which we can see his coming more clearly and such events stand out as special providences. The firefly is visible only in the little section of its path in which it emits its flash of light, but it is speeding on its way both before and after this luminous section; and so God is not less present and active in ordinary events than in the critical points at which his providence flashes out in luminous visibility.

In the Old Testament Jehovah is frequently represented as coming to his people and to their enemies, especially in judgment. A few passages will illustrate this.

"Our God cometh, and doth not keep silence: a fire devoureth before him, and it is very tempestuous round about him" (Ps. 50:3).

Of Babylon it is prophesied: "Wail ye; for the day of Jehovah is at hand; as destruction from the

[1] *The Kingdom of God*, p. 287.

Almighty shall it come. . . . Behold, the day of Jehovah cometh, cruel, with wrath and fierce anger; to make the land a desolation, and to destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light; the sun shall be darkened in its going forth, and the moon shall not cause its light to shine. . . . Therefore I will make the heavens to tremble, and the earth shall be shaken out of its place, in the wrath of Jehovah of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger. . . . And Babylon, the glory of the kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldeans' pride, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall shepherds make their flocks to lie down there" (Isa. 13:6, 9–10, 13, 19–20). How strikingly has this coming of Jehovah been fulfilled?

A similar coming is "The burden of Egypt. Behold, Jehovah rideth upon a swift cloud, and cometh unto Egypt: and the idols of Egypt shall tremble at his presence; and the heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst of it" (Isa. 19:1).

Jehovah comes against Assyria: "Behold, the name of Jehovah cometh from afar, burning with his anger, and in thick rising smoke: his lips are full of indignation, and his tongue is as a devouring fire; . . . For through the voice of Jehovah shall the Assyrian be dismayed, with his rod will he smite him" (Isa. 30:27, 31).

Jehovah comes in judgment even to Jerusalem and Samaria: "For, behold, Jehovah cometh forth out of his place, and will come down, and tread upon the high places of the earth. And the mountains shall be melted under him, and the valleys shall be cleft, as wax before fire, as waters that are poured down a steep place. For the transgression of Jacob is all this, and for the sins of the house of Israel" (Micah 1:3–5).

Zechariah prophesies that Jehovah will come to the help of Jerusalem: "For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle. . . . Then shall Jehovah go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle . . . and Jehovah my God shall come, and all the holy ones with thee" (Zech. 14:2, 3, 5).

Malachi closes the prophetic admonitions of the Old Testament with the warning of Jehovah, "lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (Mal. 4:6).

These passages, and many others of like import, show us how common it was with the prophets to represent the providential presence and activity of God in human affairs as "the coming of Jehovah" and how familiar such symbolic language was to the readers of the Old Testament. Jesus and the New Testament writers were equally familiar with such language and their ideas and speech were saturated with these symbols; and these Old Testament representations throw much light upon New Testament teaching. We are thus prepared to find that the coming of Christ does not always refer to his second or final coming.

To the church in Ephesus was given this warning: "Remember therefore whence thou art fallen, and repent and do the first works; or else I come to thee, and will move thy candle-stick out of its place, except thou repent" (Rev. 2:5). To the church in Sardis came the warning: "Remember therefore how thou hast received and didst hear; and keep it, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee" (Rev. 3:3). In a similar way the admonition was given to the church in Philadelphia: "I will come quickly: hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. He that overcometh I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God" (Rev. 3:11–12). This seems to refer to the impending Roman persecution, and Christ promises the members of this church that he will come quickly to their help. The writer and the readers of this apocalyptic book were familiar with the thought of Jehovah coming in judgment and in deliverance, and these predictions were fulfilled. Christ did "come" in judgment upon these churches. "The coming of Christ is the expectation which beats in" the Apocalypse, says Salmond, "the keynote of all its music, solemn and joyous. This coming is not merely an event of the end. For to John historical acts of judgment or chastening, as in the cases of the seven churches, are identified with the Lord's coming. But there is also a final objective coming, which has the judgment in view." [2]

[2] *The Christian Doctrine of Immortality*, p. 432.

Along the same line, the coming of the Lord has been manifested all down through Christian history. Every notable event, especially such as closely touches the interests of the kingdom of God, is such a coming. The conversion of Constantine, involving the formal change of front of the Roman Empire towards Christianity, may be rightly viewed as such an event. The Reformation was a powerful intervention of God in the history of his kingdom. Our Civil War set forward the hour hand on the clock of Christianity. And it is no visionary fancy that sees, not a premillenarian second coming of Christ, but a real coming of God in the present great war, for we believe it marks an epochal hour and forward movement in the development of that democracy which is in spirit so closely allied to the principle of the kingdom of God and prepares the way for and fulfills its coming. Every act of judgment and justice and every new manifestation of sympathy and service is a coming of God and of Christ. It is in this faith that we sing the inspiring strains of our Battle Hymn of the Republic:

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord;
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored;
He hath loosed the fateful lightning of his terrible swift sword;
His truth is marching on.

2. *The Coming of Christ at the Destruction of Jerusalem.* We now take up the predictions of Christ as to his coming made in his apocalyptic discourse re-

corded in Matt. 24–25, with parallel accounts in Mark 13 and Luke 21. There are difficulties in connection with this discourse, probably growing out of the evident fact that the disciples did not always report the addresses of Jesus in their proper order and continuity, but put together parts of his sermons and sayings delivered at different times, as is plainly the case with the Sermon on the Mount. It seems clear that predictions of several comings of Christ are found in this eschatological discourse, though they may not all have been uttered at the same time or in the same connection.

The first of these is the plain reference to the coming of Christ in the destruction of Jerusalem. It is important to note that the discourse was occasioned by the disciples' calling the attention of Jesus to the great stones in the temple and his reply, "See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down" (Matt. 24:2). After they had gone over to the mount of Olives the disciples asked him, "Tell us, when shall these things be, and what shall be the sign when these things are all about to be accomplished?" (Mark 13:4). This started Jesus off on his discourse in which he tells them that they shall hear of wars and rumors of wars, and that tribulation shall come upon them, and that they are to pray that their flight may not be in the winter, and that "except the Lord had shortened the days, no flesh would have been saved." "For as the lightning cometh forth from the

east, and is seen even unto the west; so shall be the coming of the Son of Man. Wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together. But immediately, after the tribulation of those days, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heaven shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Matt. 24:27–30). Such language was not strange to the Jews, for were they not familiar with such passages as "Behold, the day of Jehovah cometh, cruel, with wrath and fierce anger; to make the land a desolation, and to destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light; the sun shall be darkened in its going forth, and the moon shall not cause its light to shine" (Isa. 13:9–10), and "Behold, Jehovah rideth upon a swift cloud" (Isa. 19:1)? Then, in the midst of this discourse, Jesus declared, "Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all these things be accomplished" (Matt. 24:34).

Now when we remember that this discourse was delivered to explain when the stones of the temple would be thrown down and note how closely it corresponds with Old Testament prophecies of judgment and especially mark the fact that Jesus himself declared that "This generation shall not pass away, till all these

things be accomplished," and then compare these predictions with what happened when the Romans under Titus came in A. D. 70 and besieged Jerusalem and shut it up in awful famine and suffering and finally stormed it with frightful slaughter, only a remnant escaping down to the region of the Dead Sea, is it not plain that this "coming of the Son of man" refers to and was fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem? The premillenarians are embarrassed by the fact that this coming was to take place in the generation then living and they try to escape this point by making it out that "this generation" means "this Jewish nation" or "this Jewish race," but this rendering cannot be permitted. It is certain that Christ predicted one coming of his that would take place in that generation and this was literally fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem.

A similar saying of Jesus occurred in connection with his sending forth the disciples on a missionary tour through Judea, when he said, "But when they persecute you in this city, flee into the next: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone through the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come" (Matt. 10:23). This is another prediction of a coming of Christ that would take place in his day, but we cannot determine just what event Jesus referred to in this instance, whether to his coming at the destruction of Jerusalem or at Pentecost or in some other way. There were also two other occasions, presently to be noted, Mark 9:1 and Mark 14. 62, when Jesus re-

ferred to his coming in his kingdom in the time of those then living.

The fact thus stands clear and unshakable that on several occasions Jesus predicted that in some sense he would come again in that generation, these comings could not have referred to his final advent, and they were fulfilled.

3. *The Coming of Christ at His Resurrection.* Was not the resurrection of Jesus a literal return to this world? At Cæsarea Philippi he made the first disclosure to the disciples of his approaching death and resurrection. "And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders, and the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again" (Mark 8:31). In his last discourse with his disciples in the upper room in Jerusalem on the night before his crucifixion he spoke of his going away and then presently returning again. "I go unto the Father," he announced. He offset this sorrowful news with the promise, "I will not leave you desolate: I come unto you." "Yet a little while and the world beholdeth me no more: but ye behold me: because I live, ye shall live also." Later in the evening he returned to this subject and spoke still more plainly. "A little while, and ye behold me no more; and again a little while, and ye shall see me." The disciples were mystified at this language, and Jesus explained further: "Do ye inquire among yourselves concerning this, that I said, A little while, and ye behold me not, and again a little

while, and ye shall see me? Verily, verily, I say unto you, that ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but when she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for the joy that a man is born into the world. And ye therefore now have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no one taketh from you" (John 16: 16, 19–23). In all this, was he not plainly referring to his going away in a "little while" in his death, and then to his return in a "little while" in his resurrection? The resurrection of Jesus was a glorious coming again by which he "was declared to be the Son of God with power" (Rom. 1: 4), a coming which restored the dissipated faith of the bewildered and scattered disciples and turned them into flaming apostles and mighty men who began to reshape the world; a coming which has ever since been a foundation stone and central pillar of the historic faith of Christianity, and a vital fact and force throbbing in and transforming the life of the world.

4. *The Coming of Christ on the Day of Pentecost.* On the day of Pentecost after the wonderful outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the people so that many were perplexed and began to offer profane explanations of the extraordinary manifestation, Peter stood up and gave the true explanation: "This is that which hath been spoken through the prophet Joel (2: 28–31):

And it shall be in the last days, saith God,
I will pour forth of my Spirit upon all flesh:
And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
And your young men shall see visions,
And your old men shall dream dreams:
Yea, and on my servants and on my handmaidens in those days
Will I pour forth of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy.
And I will show wonders in the heaven above,
And signs on the earth beneath;
Blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke:
The sun shall be turned into darkness,
And the moon into blood,
Before the day of the Lord come,
That great and notable day:
And it shall be, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved (Acts 2: 16–21).

What can be plainer than this? The prophecy uttered by the prophet Joel as to the coming of the Lord in his Spirit is here declared by Peter to be fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. Now let us connect with this the sayings of Jesus as to the coming of his kingdom in his time. When he first disclosed to his disciples the fact of his coming crucifixion and warned them of coming trials, he said unto them: "Verily I say unto you, There are some here of them that stand by, who shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God come with power" (Mark 9: 1). This was said for their encouragement in view of the coming tribulation. Again, when Jesus stood at his trial before Caiaphas and the sanhedrin, when the high priest asked him, "Art thou the Christ?" he answered, "I am: and ye shall see the Son of man

sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven" (Mark 14:62). Because these comings were to take place within the lifetime of the disciples and of the members of the sanhedrin, they are best referred to his coming at the destruction of Jerusalem, which some members of the sanhedrin must have seen, and especially to the coming at the day of Pentecost when the disciples did see, before they tasted of death, "the kingdom of God come with power."

We thus have cumulative proof that Jesus said he would come and that he did come in more ways than one in his own generation.

5. *The Coming of Christ in His Holy Spirit.* Jesus had much to say to his disciples, on the night before his crucifixion, as to his sending the Holy Spirit to take his place and carry on his work. "Nevertheless I tell you the truth: It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you. And he, when he is come, will convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment. . . . He shall glorify me: for he shall take of mine, and shall declare it unto you" (John 16:7–8, 14). Pentecost was an immediate and marvelous fulfillment of this promise of his coming, as it was also the fulfillment, as Peter said, of the earlier prophecy of Joel that God would pour out his Spirit upon all flesh.

The same promise was made to the disciples just before the ascension of Jesus. The disciples asked him

once more, "Lord, dost thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" The Jewish eschatological kingdom was still lurking in their minds. Jesus turned their thoughts away from this kingdom, first by telling them that it was not given unto them to know times and seasons, and second, by turning their thoughts to his spiritual kingdom with the promise, "But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Thus Jesus in his very last recorded words to his disciples swept away the Jewish eschatological kingdom and replaced it with his spiritual kingdom and promised them that his Holy Spirit would "come" to them and they should receive power and become his worldwide witnesses, and all this was fulfilled "as he said."

Every genuine revival of religion is a day of Pentecost when Christ comes and pours out his Spirit, often in Pentecostal power, and all classes are touched and filled with the new life and hundreds and sometimes thousands are added to the church. The Reformation was an epochal revival of religion, and the revival under the Wesleys and Whitefield inaugurated an outpouring of the Spirit that baptized and saturated England with new spiritual life. Frequent historic revivals have swept this country with the same power. It is for this coming of Christ that the church catholic and every individual church is constantly praying, and the answer is received when there "come seasons of

refreshing from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19).

Not only so, but the steady infiltration of the Spirit of God into the world in its ethical and spiritual evolution as it slowly undermines and then, it may be in catastrophic crises, sweeps away great evils, such as slavery in our Civil War, and the gradual prohibition culminating in the sudden abolition of the liquor traffic, is a constant coming of Christ. The social percolation of the spirit of the gospel into the whole organism of society, abating injustices and frightful inequalities, adjusting the relations of social classes, solving the problems of capital and labor, sowing the world with charities and philanthropies, replacing brutality with brotherhood, purifying politics and setting up higher national ideals and permeating the world in its international life with the spirit of unity and good will and universal righteousness and peace, is also the coming of Jesus Christ. God is always coming into the world in these gradual ethical and social processes, and we should not be blind to this constant coming of the ever immanent Spirit of God. "It is the untaught and pagan mind which sees God's presence only in miraculous and thundering action; the more Christian our intellect becomes, the more we see God in growth." [3]

Especially is the widening and deepening work of missions by which the gospel is penetrating all lands and lifting every continent and island of the sea a

[3] Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel*, p. 225.

grand fulfillment of Joel's prophecy that God would pour forth his Spirit upon all flesh and of Christ's promise that he would come in his Holy Spirit to convict the world of sin and righteousness and judgment and be with his followers as they make disciples of all nations always, even unto the end of the world.

6. *The Coming of Christ to Individuals.* Christ comes to individuals in their personal experience of his grace and providence, as in conversion and in special crises in life and also in the common daily experience of the Christian life. The command to "knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (Matt. 7:7) illustrates this personal coming in answer to prayer and effort; and the announcement, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Rev. 3:20) is a further illustration of this personal coming of Christ to the believer.

In his farewell intimate conversation with his disciples Jesus said, "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go, I will send him unto you." The coming of the Holy Spirit into the hearts of believers thus fulfills a coming of Christ to individuals. In the same discourse he uttered the memorable words: "Let not your heart be troubled: believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have

told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I come again, and will receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14: 1–3). Did this promise relate only to his final coming? Was he referring to an event that was then at least nineteen hundred years away? Is it possible that Jesus has not yet come and taken these disciples unto himself in the many mansions? Such a view is repudiated every time these comforting words are read at a Christian burial service. We do not believe that such an interpretation is credible. Jesus came for these disciples and took them to himself in the many mansions at their death and they are now in his presence, as are all those that die in the Lord (Rev. 14: 13). Is not the exhortation, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Rev. 2: 10) a promise of Christ to receive and reward the individual believer in death?

Christ therefore is coming for individual believers in every experience in which the Holy Spirit influences them in faith and faithfulness, sympathy and service. And, in particular, Christ comes to the individual in death to take him to himself in the heavenly mansions. The whole Christian world has cherished this faith for nineteen centuries, and to deny this would hush the immortal music of this promise and virtually strike it from the Bible. Premillenarians generally deny this meaning, and this shows how their theory drives a dislocating plowshare through the Scriptures, disturbing if not destroying the generally accepted and

consecrated meaning of many a precious passage. It is true that death is not the second or final coming of Christ: but it is a coming; it is a catastrophic coming in which the Christian life reaches its supreme crisis; it is the harvest that comes at the end of Christian growth in grace; and this promise gives victorious faith and peace, courage and calm in the last hour and article of death.

Summing up as to the various comings we see that it is plainly taught in the Scriptures that Christ comes in various ways so that all the Scripture teaching on the subject cannot be referred to his final coming: he comes in historic events, especially in judgments; he came at his resurrection, at Pentecost, and at the destruction of Jerusalem, which marked the end of the Jewish state and dispensation; he comes in his Holy Spirit; he comes in all the ethical and spiritual progress of the kingdom of God in the world; he comes to the individual in the personal experience of the grace of God and in special events in his providence; and he comes to the believer in death to take him to himself in heaven.[4]

[4] This interpretation of the *parousia* or coming of Christ is not only held by commentators generally, but is also held by many commentators who are premillenarians or have premillenarian tendencies. Rev. Dr. D. MacDill, in his *Modern Premillennialism Discussed*, pp. 100–113, gives quotations showing this from Olshausen, Meyer, Lange, Alford, Stier, Gill, Newton, and Elliot, who are all premillenarians or are claimed to be such. We reproduce a few of these quotations. Olshausen affirms that "the advent is by no means to be looked upon as an occurrence happening at a particular time in the future, but is to be viewed as something extending throughout the history of

7. The Final Coming of Christ. We come now to the important subject of the second or final coming of Christ. That this coming is taught and predicted in the New Testament is not a matter of dispute among Bible students. It is accepted and cherished as "the blessed hope" by both premillenarians and postmillenarians. The fact of Christ's second coming is not at all the point that divides them, as we have already seen. The fundamental point of difference relates to the order and purpose of this coming, though this point involves many related points of difference. With reference to this final coming of Christ several remarks may be made.

(1) It is not always easy to distinguish between

the world, and spiritually near to every one, without excluding the fact that the prophecy respecting it will also be externally fulfilled in its whole meaning, at the end of this age." He thus finds parousia at the fall of Jerusalem, in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, at the death of every Christian, and in every remarkable manifestation of justice. Meyer says that "Jesus has spoken of his advent in a threefold sense, for he described as his coming (1) the outpouring of the Spirit which was shortly to take place; (2) the manifestation of his majesty and power, in the triumph of his cause upon the earth; (3) his coming in the strict eschatological sense to raise the dead, to hold the last judgment and to set up his kingdom." Lange declares that there is a parousia of Christ at the death of every Christian, as do also Alford and Stier. Alford says in his *Greek Testament,* in his comment on John 14:3: "We must bear in mind what Stier well calls the 'perspective' of prophecy. The *coming again of the Lord* is not one single act,—as his Resurrection, or the descent of the Spirit, or his second personal advent, or the final coming to judgment; but the *great complex* of all these, the result of which shall be, his taking his people to himself to be where he is." Meyer's discussion of the subject with his views on the different comings of Christ will be found in his *Critical Hand-Book on Matthew,* pp. 430–434.

the nearer comings we have already considered and the final coming of Christ. We have noted the fact that Jesus himself referred to more than one coming in his apocalyptic discourse (Matt. 24). In some of its passages he is evidently referring to the destruction of Jerusalem when he is warning his disciples to pray that their flight may not be in the winter and when he assures them, "Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all these things be accomplished." But he also looks beyond this proximate coming when he says: "And this gospel shall be preached in the whole world for a testimony unto all the nations; then shall the end come . . . and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming on the clouds with power and great glory. And he shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." In these passages, mingled together in a chapter that bears marks of being composite, we may not always be able to tell when Jesus is speaking of a near and when of a final event. These near comings may be viewed as preliminary and preparatory to the ultimate coming, partial fulfillments of prophecies that receive their final fulfillment in the great crisis and end of the world. They therefore stretch out before us through the future, and it is not surprising that we cannot always mark the point where the partial fades into the final fulfillment.

(2) This final coming is a remote event in the teach-

ing of Jesus, as the end of the world is generally so considered in our modern thought. We have already traversed the evidence for this view. It is contained in the parables of the Leaven and the Mustard-seed and in the intimation in the parable of the Talents that the lord of the servants cometh "after a long time"; and especially in the positive teaching that "the gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a testimony unto all the nations"; and most explicitly of all in the great commission which bids us go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them and teaching them to observe all that Christ commanded. This is a program that by universal consent has only been begun and that will take long ages to fulfill. We have also seen that our modern knowledge of astronomy and geology as to the age of the earth and the prospective period of its duration and of anthropology as to the probable antiquity of man and forecasts as to the future of humanity all combine to put the end of the world in a remote future.

(3) The final coming of Christ is to be attended with the "last things," the general resurrection and judgment that mark the end of the world. This fact in Scripture teaching would never have been doubted and no other theory would ever have been dreamed of if it were not for one highly symbolical passage of Scripture (Rev. 20:4–6), which will be examined later in this study. The uniform representation of Scripture is that when the gospel of the kingdom is preached "in the whole world for a testimony unto

all the nations," "then shall the end come" (Matt. 24:14); and in the long program and process of converting the world set forth in the great commission Christ will be with his disciples always, "even unto the end of the world." In the parable of the Tares "the harvest is the end of the world" (Matt. 13:39). The ordinance of the Lord's Supper is to be administered "till he come" (I Cor. 11:26). These and similar passages plainly teach that the work of preaching the gospel and administering the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper will be finished and that therefore the church of Christ or the total number of the redeemed will be complete at his final coming.

The general resurrection and judgment will take place in connection with the final coming of Christ, as is asserted or implied in many passages of Scripture. The premillenarian theory is that the righteous dead will be raised up at the coming of Christ to inaugurate the millennial kingdom and that a thousand years afterward the wicked dead will be raised up and judged, and thus there are to be two resurrections a thousand years and more apart. Leaving out of view for the present Rev. 20:4–6, which we shall consider later, it is impossible to fit this theory in with the general and uniform teaching of Scripture. Jesus taught the simultaneous resurrection and judgment of both the righteous and the wicked when he declared, "Marvel not at this: for the hour cometh, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall

come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment" (John 5:28–29). It is only by a forced interpretation that the plain meaning of this passage can be made to fit the premillenarian view. Alford, in his *Greek Testament,* who interprets Rev. 20:4–6 in the premillenarian sense, interprets this passage of a general simultaneous resurrection of the righteous and the wicked, apparently not perceiving that these two positions destroy each other; and he falls into the same inconsistency in other passages, as in his interpretation of the great commission in Matt. 28:18–20, which is destructive of his premillenarianism as set forth in other places.

Paul knows only one general resurrection and judgment, which is in immediate connection with the eternal state. He speaks of "the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his works, . . . in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ" (Rom. 2:5–6, 16). "For we must all be made manifest before the judgment seat of Christ: that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (II Cor. 5:10). "Wherefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall each man have his praise from God" (I Cor. 4:5). "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order:

Christ the firstfruits; then they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have abolished all rule and authority and power" (I Cor. 15:22–24).

The two apocalyptic books of the Bible teach a simultaneous resurrection and judgment of the righteous and the wicked. In Daniel we read: "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (12:2). In Rev. 20:11–15, immediately following the difficult passage 1–10, we have this description: "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat upon it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead that were in it; and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, even the lake of fire. And if any were not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire." It would be hard to put a description of the general resurrection and final judgment of the dead into plainer and more express words. The dead, "the

great and the small," stand before the throne, and "the sea gave up the dead" and "death and Hades," death itself, "gave up the dead that were in them," and "the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works." And yet in the face of all these statements the premillenarians, driven by the exigency of their theory, see in the passage only the resurrection and judgment of the wicked.

Finally, we have another great description of the judgment given us by Christ himself and it places his coming in immediate connection with the general judgment: "But when the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the angels with him, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all the nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats; and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left" (Matt. 25: 31–33).

These and other Scripture passages are conclusive proof that no millennial period of a thousand years follows the final coming of Christ, but that this event will be immediately attended with the general resurrection and judgment of the dead, ushering in the eternal state. This fact is fatal to the premillenarian theory of two resurrections with a millennial period of a thousand years intervening, the millennium to follow the final coming of Christ.

(4) What is the nature of this final coming of Christ and general resurrection and judgment? Scrip-

ture language represents Christ as "coming in clouds with great power and glory" (Mark 13:26) so that "every eye shall see him" (Rev. 1:7); and the resurrection as taking place so that "all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice" (John 5:28); and the judgment as assembling "the dead, the great and the small" who stand before the throne, when books are opened and all are judged according to "the things which were written in the books" (Rev. 20:12). How are these Scripture representations to be interpreted? The premillenarians literalize and materialize these descriptions of the second coming of Christ, just as the Jews materialized the prophetic figurative descriptions of his first coming. As we have seen, the Jews reveled in literal interpretations of the Old Testament prophecies and had their hearts passionately set on a conquering Messiah who would establish a kingdom with its capital at Jerusalem, attended with the miraculous prosperity of a land flowing with milk and honey and of mountains dripping with sweet wine, and with all the pomp and pageantry of a world empire with themselves seated on thrones and ruling over the nations.

These materialistic interpretations and dreams were all false and met with tragic disappointment. Jesus himself had to conquer the temptation of seeking such a kingdom when he was tempted in the wilderness, and all through his ministry he struggled to root such notions out of the minds and hearts of his disciples; and with such discouragingly small success that just before

his ascension they were still inquiring, "Lord, dost thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6). And now we find the premillenarians in a strikingly similar way materializing the second coming of Christ, turning it into a physical pageant in the clouds accompanied with a physical resurrection and finally ending in a literal local judgment with literal physical books in evidence. Postmillenarians, however, while holding to the reality of these events, see that the New Testament representations of the second coming of Christ with its attendant events are largely symbolical, as were the Old Testament representations of the first coming and kingdom of the Messiah.

As to the coming of Christ in the clouds so that every eye could see him, would not this be a physical impossibility? For one thing, does Christ now have a physical body which can be seen by our physical eyes? Does he not now have that "spiritual body" which is not "flesh and blood"? And for another thing, if he were up in the clouds, could he be seen from every side of the earth? The Bible never requires us in our faith to contradict our senses and the laws of nature,[5] and it does contradict both to suppose that from every side of the opaque earth a body could be seen up in the air. The statement that "every eye

[5] There is good premillenarian authority for this statement. Dr. S. H Kellogg, who holds to "the principle of literality," refuses to believe in the literal interpretation of Zechariah that "all flesh should go up every year to Jerusalem," because this would "involve what all candid men will probably admit to be a practical impossibility." *The Jews*, p. 110.

shall see him," taken literally, is just as "practically impossible" as the statement, "This is my body," when taken in the same way. We have no difficulty in seeing that "This is my body" is a symbolical statement of a spiritual fact, and so we conclude that the statement that Christ will come physically visible in the clouds is similarly to be taken as a figurative statement of a spiritual reality.[6] Such language was not unfamiliar to the Jews, as we have already seen, as their apocalyptic literature was full of such phrases and the Old Testament prophets spoke the same speech ("Behold, Jehovah rideth upon a swift cloud, and cometh unto Egypt"), and it would be easy for them to understand this prediction in a figurative sense.

The premillenarians argue at this point that "as the prophetic words of the Old Testament Scriptures, concerning the first coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, were literally fulfilled in his birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension, so the prophetic words of both the Old and the New Testaments concerning his second coming will be literally fulfilled in his visible bodily return to this earth 'in like manner as he went up into heaven.'" But the Jewish prophecies of the first coming of the Messiah and of his kingdom were not liter-

[6] The statement in Acts 1:11, "Jesus . . . shall so come in like manner as ye beheld him going into heaven," which some premillenarians hold to be conclusive as to the physical return of Jesus, cannot be pressed into strict likeness, for then Jesus would have to return on Mount Olivet and exactly reproduce his ascension. The similarity of the coming to the going of Jesus need not be in the physical fact, but in the spiritual reality. The Greek phrase (ὃν τρόπον), here translated "in like manner," is used in Matt. 23:37, "even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings," where it cannot mean literal likeness.

ally fulfilled, but are being realized in the spiritual kingdom of Christ, and this disappointment was the tragedy of the Jewish nation. This argument of the premillenarians turns against themselves, for they are repeating the same literalistic mistake in the interpretation of these prophecies that the Jews made in their blindness, and it is still attended with the same consequences. Their attempt to save the literalism of the Old Testament prophecies of the Messianic kingdom by hoisting them clear over the first into the second coming of Christ is an exegetical feat, which, as we have seen,[7] violates clear and constant New Testament teaching.

As to the resurrection of the body, Paul flatly denies that it is a physical body of flesh and blood. "Flesh and blood," he says, "cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption" (I Cor. 15:50). Not only so, but he expressly argues this point and combats the view that the physical body is raised out of the grave in his great chapter on the resurrection (I Cor. 15). "Thou foolish one, that which thou thyself sowest is not quickened except it die: and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not the body that shall be, but a bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other kind; but God giveth it a body even as it pleased him, and to each seed a body of its own. . . . So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in

[7] Pages 52–55.

weakness; it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. . . . And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly" (36–38, 42–44, 49). This argument stands squarely against those who would make the resurrection a raising of our bodies out of the grave as physical organisms. There may be some connection between the present natural and the resurrection spiritual body; both may in some way be determined in their nature by the character of the spirit out of which they grow and which they express and serve; but the two are not composed of the same material elements and the resurrection body is a spiritual organism adapted to the eternal heavenly life.[8]

We cannot conceive of a general judgment as taking place in a physical location with physical books opened out of which each one's record would be read and a corresponding reward or retribution would then be pronounced upon him. The world would not contain the books and the process would consume ages. It has been shown that if only fifty times the present population of the world were to pass in review in such a judgment it would take two thousand years to complete it, allowing one second to each soul.[9] Such a view reduces the sublime conception of a final judgment to a cheap and childish spectacular display.

[8] "It is no use asking for an explanation of the precise relation between the body of humiliation and the body of glory." Denney, *Jesus and the Gospel*, p. 105.

[9] See H. C. Sheldon's *System of Christian Doctrine*, p. 568.

What place or need is there for these physical events? Is not Christ coming to every believer in death? Does not the departing saint receive a spiritual body at death as he is, in Paul's phrase, "unclothed" of his mortal flesh and is "clothed upon"? Do not "we know that if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens? For verily in this we groan, longing to be clothed upon with our habitation which is from heaven: if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For indeed we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened; not for that we would be unclothed, but that we would be clothed upon, that what is mortal may be swallowed up of life" (II Cor. 5:1–4). And does not judgment always follow death? "It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this cometh judgment" (Heb. 9:27). Did not the penitent thief enter Paradise with Christ that same day, and do not the souls of believers at death "immediately pass into glory"?

This view does not contradict the common Christian faith in the reality of these events. There is to be an appropriate climax and wind-up to this world. It is not an abiding city but a temporary habitation for the human race. Scripture and science agree in this view and can even unite in Peter's prophecy that "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned

up" (II Pet. 3:10). But we do not know just what is the nature of these last things and probably we could not understand or picture or conceive them if they were revealed to us. The Scriptural representations of them are like the symbolical descriptions of Christ in Revelation in which "his head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto burnished brass, as if it had been refined in a furnace; and his voice as the voice of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength" (Rev. 1:14–16). Such language suggests sublimity of the person so pictured, but he would be a fearful being if encountered in literal reality and would cause us to fall down in fright as dead, as John did when he beheld him in his vision. These representations are like the descriptions in Revelation of heaven with its streets of gold and gates of single pearls, splendid imagery to the imagination, but an impossible place in which to live when taken literally. So Christ is to come in some striking manifestation of his presence to all the world, which will be just as real as and inconceivably more glorious than would be any physical coming in the clouds. The risen dead are to have spiritual organisms that will fulfill their nature and needs and be as real as and immensely more powerful and serviceable and beautiful and splendid than would be any resurrected physical body; which compared with this

" muddy vesture of decay " will be as the swift-winged, gorgeously arrayed butterfly compared with the slow-crawling, shaggy caterpillar out of which it emerges. There shall be a final judgment in which all men shall have rendered unto them and manifested to others a verdict according to the deeds done in the body, and it will be infinitely more searching and impressive than any literal books could be.

All these coming climacteric events will not only be as real as any of these materialistic descriptions and interpretations, but they will surpass our utmost conceptions of these things. Then can we say, " Things which eye saw not, and ear heard not, and which entered not into the heart of man, whatsoever things God prepared for them that love him. But unto us God revealed them through the Spirit " (I Cor. 2:9–10).

Let no one say that this is denying or doubting or wresting the Scripture teaching as to the blessed hope. It is trying to understand this hope in accordance with general Scripture teaching and analogy and in accordance with all our knowledge. It is rescuing these last things from impossible and childish literalistic and materialistic interpretations and giving them a rational and real meaning. It is protecting them from crude and crass views that do harm as they disturb and perplex sober readers of the Bible and tend to turn scholarly and cultured minds towards doubt and skepticism. It is trying to escape the literalism and blindness of the scribes and Pharisees as to these same things and to see the light of truth and reality.

CHAPTER VIII

WATCHING FOR THE COMING

THE duty of watching for the coming of the Lord is a vital point in any theory of this subject. The New Testament frequently enjoins such watching upon us so that it must be a duty of great practical importance. Premillenarians hold that their theory is the only one that permits the fulfillment of this duty. Watching, they nearly all insist, depends upon and calls for the constant imminence of the coming of Christ. They stake their whole theory on this point and are willing to have it stand or fall by this one test. And they challenge postmillenarians to show how on their theory they can keep this command at all. Unless the second coming is always imminent, they say, how can we watch for it? The interposition of a thousand years of millennial work of converting the world, or, indeed, of any period of time however short, before this coming thereby annuls and makes impossible any expectation of and watching for it. Their writers are emphatic and insistent and almost wearisomely repetitious on this point and declare outright that the postmillenarian theory thwarts and annuls this command that rings throughout the New Testament in the most

earnest and urgent tones.[1] Now we are willing to accept this challenge and by this test to stand or fall.

1. *What Do Premillenarians Mean by Watching?* We begin the discussion of this point by inquiring, What do premillenarians mean by watching for the second coming of Christ? Just what psychological state and exercise of mind that is distinctive of their doctrine do they experience and practice? After reading large quantities of their literature we do not know. They write and speak voluminously and vociferously on the duty of watching, but they are lamentably indefinite and vague in stating what they mean. Do they "jab their noses against the window panes, looking for him?" as Dr. John McNeil asks. Do they stand gazing into the sky in the hope of seeing Christ at any moment coming in the clouds? Some of them have done this very thing, and this is not illogical and absurd on their theory. If this doctrine were true, the Millerites waiting and watching in white robes were not such fanatics and fools after all. However, the premillenarian leaders and writers of to-day disclaim any such view and practice. They do not mean this by watching.

Then what do they mean and what do they do that is different from what other Christians believe and do

[1] In illustration of this see Dr. S. H. Kellogg's Essay III on "Christ's Coming: Is it Premillennial?" and Dr. John T. Duffield's Essay XII on "A Summary of the Argument in Defense of Premillenarianism" in *Premillennial Essays*, 1878. See also the London proclamation of 1918 on page 25, and *Jesus Is Coming*, p. 65.

on this subject? If their theory is true it must lead them to do something that is distinctive of them, that corresponds with and grows out of and fulfills their doctrine, something that other Christians, such as post-millenarians, do not do. As far as we can make out, they do not differ in their practice from other Christians, unless it be that they hold "prophetic conferences" and carry on a propaganda to convert other Christians to their view. They do not engage in any distinctive or special kind of Christian service that fulfills their doctrine. Some of them are zealous in missionary work, but this is not distinctive of them. Some of them claim superior loyalty to their Lord and superior piety in themselves, but neither is this distinctive of them: there have always been such people among all kinds of professors of religion, pagan, Jewish and Christian. On pragmatic principles if this doctrine is true it should "make a difference." Again we ask, What is this distinctive difference, and just what would premillenarians have us do in the way of watching? In our deep ignorance and humble desire for information on this point we have searched their books and appealed to them personally for light, but, owing either to the denseness of our mind or to the darkness of theirs, we have not yet seen its clear shining.

2. *Scripture Teaching as to Watching.* Several instances and passages of Scripture bring out what is its teaching on this point.

When Jesus ascended on the mount of Olives the disciples stood watching him as a cloud received him out

of their sight. "And while they were looking steadfastly into heaven as he went, behold two men stood by them in white apparel: who also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye looking into heaven? this Jesus who was received up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye beheld him going into heaven. Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet" (Acts 1: 10–12). These disciples were the first to watch by standing and gazing up into heaven, and they were told not to do this and they went back to their work. Watching, then, is not sky-gazing, and the Scriptures condemn this way of looking for the coming of Christ.

The next time we hear in the New Testament of the second coming of the Lord is in the Thessalonian church. Paul introduced the matter in his First Epistle to them in which he said: "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (I Thess. 4: 16–18). But these words, instead of comforting the Thessalonians, appear to have almost thrown them into a panic, so that Paul wrote them a second Epistle in which he hastened to correct the wrong impression they had received from or the wrong interpretation they had placed on his words. It is thus a singular fact that

the very first time this subject was introduced into a Christian church it caused misunderstanding and trouble, and this unhappy fate seems to have attended it ever since. "Now we beseech you, brethren," Paul wrote, "touching the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto him; to the end that ye be not quickly shaken from your mind, nor yet be troubled, either by spirit, or by word, or by epistle as from us, as that the day of the Lord is just at hand; let no man beguile you in any wise: for it will not be, except the falling away come first, and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, he that opposeth and exalteth himself against all that is called God or that is worshipped; so that he sitteth in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God" (II Thess. 2: 1–4).

How, then, did Paul compose and reassure these excited and disturbed converts of his as to this event? By telling them that "it will not be" until something else happens first, and this prior event was "the falling away" that must "come first" and the further event of the appearing of "the man of sin" that must first "be revealed." We may remark at once that this contradicts the premillenarian theory that the interposition of any event before the coming of Christ renders it impossible to "watch." This "man of sin" admittedly has not yet been revealed. He was first supposed to be the persecuting Roman emperor or his pagan high priest. When the Roman emperor himself became a Christian this theory became obsolete. Next the Reformers were sure "the man of sin" was the

Pope and thundered this view in their commentaries and creeds. But the Presbyterians quietly erased this from their Confession of Faith and hardly any one holds it now. Some premillenarians now think this man is the Kaiser, but while nearly all the world agrees that he is "a man of sin," yet few Bible students would identify him with this figure in Paul's prophecy. The fact stands, however, that this "man of sin" has not yet been revealed, and this fact puts the premillenarian theory of watching in a sorry plight.

We draw from this incident the conclusion that according to Paul's teaching the way to watch for Christ's coming is not to fix the time of it as "just at hand" and then grow excited about it. If we follow Paul's teaching we shall not get out our almanacs and sacred numbers and figure out the time and then issue a proclamation announcing, in solemn language as though we were inspired, to the church and world that "the present crisis points towards the close of the times of the Gentiles" and that "the revelation of our Lord may be expected at any moment." It is amazing to see these eminent London ministers [2] doing this very thing in the face of Paul's admonition to those excited Thessalonians, and as we read their words we hark back to Paul's warning as being again right to the point, "Let no man beguile you in any wise." Watching for the coming of the Lord, then, is not worrying about it and it is not worrying other people about it. It does not consist in determining "times and seasons"

[2] See page 25.

and "the significance of the hour" and exciting emotional people and disturbing the church with startling announcements. Against those who engage in this business we appeal to Paul and his way of dealing with such disturbers of the church.

We next look into the teaching of Jesus and see what he meant by watching. This point is set forth clearly in several of his parables. In the Ten Virgins (Matt. 25: 1–13) the difference between the five wise and the five foolish ones was, not that the former kept awake and watched for the coming bridegroom, for "they all slumbered and slept" alike, but that the wise had been faithful in attending to their lamps and had filled them with oil, and the foolish ones had neglected this duty. The watching of the wise virgins consisted in their being ready for the bridegroom all the time so that they were ready for him at any time. They did not stay awake through the night and keep peering through the darkness for the coming bridegroom, but they got ready by attending to their proper duties and then they laid themselves down and slept like other people. Watching, therefore, is being ready all the time for the coming of the Lord in whatever way he may come.

Further light is thrown upon this point in the parable of the Talents (Matt. 25: 14–30). Here we see that what the lord required of his servants to whom he had entrusted talents or capital was that during his absence they should employ their capital in business so that when he returned they could account for it together

with its proper accumulated profit. These men were just to engage faithfully in their proper daily work until their master returned. Watching in this case consisted in working. Just the same point is also illustrated in the parable of the Pounds (Luke 19:11–27).

In the parable of the Porter (Mark 13:33–37) a man sojourning in a far country left his house and gave authority to his servants, to each one his work, and commanded the porter to watch. How did he expect his servants to watch? He certainly did not want them to loaf about the gate and be constantly looking up and down the road for his coming; no, he wanted them each one to be faithful to the "authority" or work given to him. And even the porter at the gate was to watch, not simply for the householder's return, but for any intruder or marauder that might be prowling about; he, too, was to be faithful in his ordinary work as a porter. In another parable (Luke 12:35–48) the point of what watching consists in is specifically explained by Jesus. He had spoken of the lord who had gone away to his marriage feast and said, "Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching." Peter spoke up and asked, "Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even unto all?" In answer to this question Jesus said, "Who then is the faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall set over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so do-

ing." This is a specific statement of what these servants were to do and how they were to watch during their lord's absence; and they were just to be faithful each one to his own appointed work.

Putting all these teachings together, we see that watching is not fixing the time of and getting excited and worrying over the Lord's coming as though it were "just at hand"; but it does consist in readiness for the Lord's return in whatever time and way he may come; and this readiness consists in simply attending to our own appointed duty and daily round of work; in brief, watching is attending to our business.

3. *Application of the Scripture Teaching.* We have already in some degree indicated the bearing of this Scripture teaching on the duty of watching, but this may now be more definitely stated. We have seen that there are various comings of the Lord, and it follows that watching for this event may not be just the same thing in each case.

(1) Let us first apply this teaching to the second or final coming of Christ. It has been shown that this is a remote event; therefore we cannot watch for it with a sense of expectancy as though it were imminent. The premillenarians are right when they say that on the postmillenarian theory we cannot thus watch for this event. The interposition of a long period of time before the final coming of Christ and the end of the world, such as we believe in on clear Scriptural and scientific grounds, does shut off watching that consists in standing on our mental tiptoes and eagerly straining

our vision for an event that may happen at any moment. The premillenarians declaim against this placing of any period of time before the advent of Christ, but when they take this position they for the moment forget that they themselves do the same thing, for they admit that the gospel must first be preached to "the whole world for a testimony unto all the nations," and hardly any of them will claim that this has been done; on the contrary they are zealously pushing missionary work in order that this may be done as speedily as possible. They also overlook the fact that Paul did the same thing when he interposed two events which he declared must "come first" (II Thess. 2:3) before the Lord would appear, which effectually stopped and were intended by Paul to stop in that day the kind of watching the premillenarians insist on; and these two events are yet to occur, or at least one of them, "the man of sin," has not yet been revealed. They further overlook the fact that Paul interposed still another event before the coming of the Lord, an event yet future, the coming into the kingdom of "the fulness of the Gentiles" (Rom. 11:25). And they still further overlook the teaching of Jesus himself when he declared that "a long time" would elapse and that the leaven of the kingdom of heaven would leaven the whole mass of humanity and, most clearly of all, that his followers were to go and make disciples of all nations and baptize them and teach them to observe all his commandments before he would return. In view of all these and other similar teach-

ings, watching in the sense of constant expectancy of the Lord's second coming is unscriptural and impossible.

Dr. S. H. Kellogg admits that "no one can deny that the Lord himself, while telling the disciples to watch, gave them distinct intimations that his coming would be delayed." [3] This is just what we have been showing, and it contravenes Dr. Kellogg's reiterated assertion that "no man *can* be said to watch, except he regard the event for which he watches as at least possible at any time." But having made this fatal admission, Dr. Kellogg seeks to repair its damaging effect by setting up the curious claim "that although without doubt we do have such intimations of a delay, yet it by no means follows that the Christians of the first century were able to see all this. For there is not a single one of the passages adduced which contains within itself the slightest chronological note which might have guided the early Christians to such a conclusion." Well, if "the early Christians" were not "able to see" these "distinct intimations" in "the first century," Dr. Kellogg was keen enough to see them in the nineteenth century, and therefore postmillenarians, not being quite so quick in their vision, may be permitted to see them in the twentieth century. At any rate these "distinct intimations" that Christ's "coming would be delayed" are still in the New Testament and they are still distinct and they still have the effect of interposing a barrier in the way of the kind

[3] See *Premillennial Essays*, p. 60.

of watching for the Lord's final return which is insisted on by the premillenarian doctrine.

In what sense, then, can we watch for the final coming of the Lord? Only in the sense of working for it by attending to our business, which we have seen is the meaning of what Jesus taught on this subject in his parables. He has given us each one a work or an "authority" in his great household, and we are each one to attend to this task and thereby watch by working for his coming. An immense amount of work must be done in building the kingdom of God in the world, work that stretches out through vast vistas of time before Christ will come to wind up the world, and it is our urgent duty and great business to do our part of this work while it is our day. In the meantime we should quit the business of calculating times and seasons and publishing proclamations of Christ's coming and exciting emotional people and disturbing the church with such visionary views and schemes; and sensible people should cease to be disturbed by these unscriptural and harmful fancies and fanaticisms.

The premillenarians further declare that the interposition of a period of time before the final coming of Christ contradicts his statement when he declared, "But of that day and hour knoweth no one, not even the angels of heaven, neither the Son, but the Father only" (Matt. 24:36). But the interposition of any time is attended with the same alleged contradiction, and the premillenarians, as we have seen, interpose periods and "distinct intimations" of delay of their

own. Furthermore, to say that the coming of the Lord is always imminent is equally contradictory of or inconsistent with entire ignorance of the time. We must accept the fact that Christ did not know the "day or hour" of his final return, and yet he may have known that it was a long way off, as he distinctly intimated. He did know some things about the time of his coming, but he did not know the day and hour. Entire ignorance of one point may be quite consistent with knowledge of related points. An American soldier in France may know he is to come back to his own country after a long time, and yet not know the day when he is to return.

(2) Christ also comes in judgment and in various ways in his providence and in the presence and work of his Holy Spirit and to each believer in death. He is pressing into our lives and into the life of the church and the world at every point and in every hour. Many of these comings are our constant privilege and blessing and we know how to prepare for and receive and enjoy them, as in every fresh experience of the grace of the Holy Spirit in our hearts and in revivals in the church and in the steady growth of the kingdom of God in the world. Others of these comings are unexpected and may be sudden and startling and catastrophic, as in great crises and judgments in the world, of which the great war is a tremendous instance, and in unexpected providences in our lives, and finally in the crisis of death; and these providential comings are always imminent so that we know not

the day or the hour when they may happen; and they often come as a thief in the night. It is plain what watching means in connection with these preliminary and partial fulfillments of the prophecy of Christ's final coming: we are to watch for them by always being ready for them, and we are to be ready for them by always attending to our own business. It is literally true that these events and especially death may come upon us at any moment, and in relation to these comings the admonition of Christ literally applies: "Watch therefore: for ye know not on what day your Lord cometh. But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what watch the thief was coming, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken through": that is, as Jesus showed in the application of this point, he would have been a "faithful and wise servant, whom his lord set over his household, to give them their food in due season. Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing": he would have attended to his proper business. "Therefore be ye also ready: for in an hour when ye think not the Son of man cometh" (Matt. 24:42–46). In every instance of the master's return in the parables of Jesus, how did he want to find his servants watching? He wanted to find them attending to the business he had given them. Just so are we to watch for his unexpected and imminent comings in his providence by attending to our work in the world.

On May 19, 1780, there was a memorable "dark

day" in New England. From a narrative of it we take the following extracts: "A most unaccountable darkening of the whole visible heavens brought intense alarm and distress to multitudes of minds, as well as dismay to the brute creation. Indeed, thousands of the good people of that day became fully convinced that the end of all things terrestrial had come; many gave up, for the time, their secular pursuits, and betook themselves to religious devotions; while many others regarded the darkness as not only a token of God's indignation against various iniquities and abominations of the age, but also as an omen of some future destruction that might overwhelm the land unless speedy repentance and reformation took place. . . . It is related that the Connecticut legislature was in session at this time, and that, so great was the darkness, the members became terrified, and thought that the day of judgment had come; a motion was consequently made to adjourn. At this, Mr. Davenport arose and said: 'Mr. Speaker, it is either the day of judgment, or it is not. If it is not there is no need of adjourning. If it is, I desire to be found doing my duty. I move that candles be brought, and that we proceed to business.'"[4] We have no further knowledge of this "Mr. Davenport," but we record our tribute of admiration for his good sense and sound theology.

When the final "great and notable day of the Lord" shall come upon this world, though it be with some

[4] *Our First Century*, pp. 89-96.

cosmic cataclysm in which "the sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood" and "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up," the best way in which the saints of that day can be found watching for his coming will be, not standing on mount Olivet or any other hilltop gazing into the sky, nor in getting excited or alarmed over it, nor in being found holding a "prophetic conference" about it, but just in "having the candles lighted and proceeding to business." Christ himself has taught his people that he will then desire to find them doing the work he has committed unto them. And in the same way we are to be ready and watch for any coming by which our Lord in his providence and Spirit may come into our world in our day and into our lives, and especially for the catastrophic event when he comes to take us to our heavenly home.

CHAPTER IX

REVELATION 20:4–6

And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, and for the word of God, and such as worshipped not the beast, neither his image, and received not the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they lived, and reigned with Christ a thousand years. The rest of the dead lived not until the thousand years should be finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: over these the second death hath no power; but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.— Rev. 20:4–6.

This passage is the bedrock and stronghold of premillenarianism. Its advocates themselves admit this. Bickersteth, a distinguished premillenarian, declares, "This is the seat of the doctrine." [1] It is unfortunate for their theory that they find its "seat" in such a passage, for it is a highly figurative passage in the most highly figurative and symbolical book in the Bible. To make such a passage the seat of a doctrine is to place it on a precarious basis. It may be true that one plain Scriptural statement is foundation enough on which to rest our faith, but if a passage is figurative

[1] *Guide to the Prophecies*, p. 248. Quoted by Brown, *Second Advent*, p. 191, who also gives other authorities that make the same admission.

it should then be interpreted in accordance with express Scripture on the same subject. It is easier and more logical to bring one figurative passage into harmony with the express general teaching of the Scriptures than to reverse this process and force the general teaching to fit one figurative passage. That the premillenarian interpretation of this passage runs athwart the general teaching of Scripture will appear as we proceed.

1. *Premillenarian Interpretation of the Passage.* The premillenarians think that this passage is a plain literal statement of their fundamental doctrine of two resurrections with a thousand years intervening, "the first resurrection" being that of the saints who are raised up at the second coming of Christ and then reign with him on earth for a thousand years, and the second resurrection being that of "the rest of the dead" who are the wicked and are raised up at the end of this period. They think they see all this in the passage as plain as a pikestaff and they wonder that other people do not see it also. But it seems to us that they see these things in this Scripture, not because they read them out of it, but because they read them into it.

In the first place, there is no resurrection of "bodies" in this passage at all. It was only "souls" that John saw in the vision. In the next place, it refers only to the souls "of them that had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, and for the word of God, and such as worshipped not the beast, neither his image, and

received not the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand," that is, the martyrs and confessors in the Roman persecution. There is literally no resurrection of all the saints in their bodies in this passage, and yet this is what the premillenarians think is there. In the third place, there is no coming of Christ, second or otherwise, in this passage. In the preceding chapter (19: 11–21) there is a highly figurative description of the coming of Christ. One appeared on "a white horse, called Faithful and True," with eyes that were flames of fire, and his garments dripping with blood, "his name is called The Word of God," and "out of his mouth proceedeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations," and there was a mighty battle, "and the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet," and "they two were cast alive into the lake of fire that burneth with brimstone." Is this to be taken literally? Not even a premillenarian will say so. It is a figurative description, we take it, of the first coming of Christ during the present dispensation when he overcomes his enemies, applying especially to the great battle then raging with pagan Rome, and it corresponds with the program of the great commission in Matthew 28: 18–20. The fact that "his name is called The Word of God" and that "out of his mouth proceedeth a sharp sword" is sufficient to identify the figure on the white horse as Christ overcoming the nations with the word of his truth and the sword of his Spirit. The twentieth chapter then opens with a vision in which John saw "an angel coming

down out of heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand." Are not the "key" and the "chain" figurative? If premillenarians insist on being literal, then literal they must be and take every such word in this vision in its literal physical sense. Next in the vision John saw thrones and then he saw the souls of the martyrs reigning with Christ. It is not said or implied that Christ came and that then these disembodied souls reigned with him on earth: this is all read into the passage as though it were there. No coming of Christ is yet introduced into this whole scene except the first coming in chapter 19:11–21. The second coming of Christ appears in the next vision, chapter 20:11–15, in which John saw "a great white throne, and him that sat upon it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away," and "the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne." Christ had appeared "a second time" for this judgment. Taking the vision of chapter 20:4–6 literally, there is in it no resurrection of the saints in their bodies and no second coming of Christ: these things are read into it. It is easy to see what one is looking for, even when it is not there.

But are there other statements or intimations of Scripture which fit into and confirm this view of two resurrections? The premillenarians say there are. They refer to such passages as "that they might obtain a better resurrection" (Heb. 11:35); "if by any means I may attain unto the resurrection from the dead" (Phil. 3:11); "but they that are accounted

worthy to attain to that world, and the resurrection from the dead" (Luke 20:35). These passages make a distinction in the character of the resurrection of the righteous and the resurrection of the wicked, but they imply no difference in the time. It is further alleged that a distinction is made between the resurrections of the two classes in that the resurrection of the righteous is said to be "from amongst the dead," implying that the rest of the dead remain in their graves, while the resurrection of the wicked is said to be simply "of the dead." [2] This distinction is based on the fact that in the Greek in some instances the preposition *ek* (ἐκ) is used, and it is not used in other instances. But this distinction, as Dr. Brown says, "will not bear an hour's examination of the Greek Testament." The reason is that the expression "resurrection of the dead" (without *ek*) is "not only applied expressly to the resurrection of both classes, but specifically to that resurrection which is peculiar to believers (I Cor. 15:42), and even to the resurrection of Christ himself (Acts 26:23)." Not only so, but the same Greek preposition (*ek*) occurs in other passages where no one would think it means "from amongst," as in John 6:26, "because ye ate of the loaves," and Gal. 3:7, "they that are of faith." In most cases this preposition is translated simply "from" and has no such meaning as this unscholarly premillenarian interpretation seeks to place upon it.

On the other hand, the theory of two resurrections

[2] See *Jesus Is Coming*, p. 59.

runs squarely against the universal teaching of Scripture that the righteous and the wicked are raised together in one general resurrection, as we have already seen ;[3] in fact, it runs against such a general resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked in the same chapter, for the vision of the souls of the martyrs reigning with Christ is immediately followed by the vision of "the great white throne" with "the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne," and "books" and "the book of life" were opened, and "the dead . . . were judged according to their works." We do not think it a violent assumption to suppose that John did not mean to contradict himself in the same chapter and the same breath.

It is thus shown that the theory of two resurrections has no slightest support in Scripture outside of this passage, and the passage itself does not affirm or imply or permit two literal resurrections. If, then, this passage in the symbolical book of Revelation "is the seat of the doctrine," it has no basis at all in Scripture. Had this passage not been in this book, this doctrine would never have been thought of ; and when it is deprived of the supposed support of this passage, the doctrine of two resurrections with the whole premillenarian scheme collapses.

2. *Postmillenarian Interpretations of the Passage.* We may be sure what a passage of Scripture does not mean, and yet not be sure what it does mean. We do not think we can certainly determine the meaning of

[3] See pp. 143–147.

this Scripture, because it is so highly symbolical and we may not be sufficiently familiar with the apocalyptic language and ideas of its author to see its meaning with clearness and certainty. We must hold to the position that this whole book of Revelation had a meaning which was plain enough to its readers to convey to them the practical message which its writer intended to express. The principle of historical interpretation holds for an apocalyptic book as strictly as for any other kind of book. The authors of these books were not proposing puzzles or mysteries to their readers, or writing to them in an unknown tongue, but they were speaking to them in a language which they understood in its broad meaning, however concealed it may have been from the uninitiated. This passage, then, had a meaning and a message for John's readers, though we may not see it clearly, or may not see it at all. It would not be without Scripture precedent if it had no meaning of importance for us: for of course some portions of Scripture in time cease to apply to us and may lose their very meaning as they are fulfilled and grow obsolete and are left behind. This is true of the whole Old Testament ritualistic system, and it is true of such local and temporary New Testament provisions as the command, "But when they persecute you in this city, flee into the next" (Matt. 10:23). Postmillenarians have their explanations of this passage, and we give two of them.

(1) The first is the view that the souls whom John saw in the vision are the souls of the martyrs and con-

fessors reappearing in the faithful and brave Christians in the days of the Roman persecution. The spirit of the martyrs reanimates the faithful witnesses for Christ under like persecution. This view was held by Augustine and it is ably defended by Dr. Brown,[4] who, in his *Second Advent,* subjects this passage to an exhaustive examination. A number of passages of Scripture are adduced to show that the idea of such reanimation was familiar to the Jews. The raising of the dead is used in a figurative sense to signify that they have come to new life in themselves or in others. Such passages are: "Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, O my people; and I will bring you into the land of Israel" (Ezek. 37:12). The restoration of Israel out of captivity to their own land is thus represented as a resurrection out of their graves. The Old Testament closes with the prophecy, "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of Jehovah come" (Mal. 4:5), and Jesus declared that this prophecy was fulfilled in John the Baptist: "For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if ye are willing to receive it, this is Elijah, that is to come" (Matt. 11:13–14). Of the returned prodigal son it is said, "for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again" (Luke 15:32). Regeneration is represented as a rising from the dead: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that

[4] This was the view of Dr. A. A. Hodge, *Outlines of Theology,* pp. 452–453. See Dr. A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology,* p. 1013.

heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live" (John 5:24–25).

From secular history Dr. Brown adduces the Brief addressed by Pope Adrian, in 1523, to the Diet at Nuremberg, containing these words: "The heretics Huss and Jerome are now alive again in the person of Martin Luther." Motley, in telling the story of the American Republic, writes: "The American Democracy is the result of all that was great in by-gone ages. All led to it. It embodies all. Mt. Sinai is in it; Greece is in it; Egypt is in it; Rome is in it; England is in it. All the arts are in it; and all the Reformations; and all discoveries." In an address delivered at the Centennial Celebration of Washington and Jefferson College on October 15, 1902, the Rev. Dr. David Gregg said: "Let any nation clash with England in war, and it will find that it strikes the whole past of England. England buried in Westminster Abbey will rise, and nerve, inspire, and fight for the England of now. The attacking nation will have to fight old Cromwell with his Ironsides; and old Nelson with his fleet; and old Wellington with his army that won Waterloo."[5] Is not this prophecy being wonderfully fulfilled to-day? And all our na-

[5] From the published volume on the Centennial, p. 138. I am also indebted to Dr. Gregg for the quotation from Motley.

tional leaders and heroes are with us in this great war, and Washington and Lincoln, Ulysses S. Grant and Robert E. Lee have in spirit risen from their tombs and are leading our forces in the fields of France.

These illustrations from sacred and secular history are ample justification for the figurative application of this passage. They show that such use of language is common and familiar, and the readers of this passage may have understood it in this sense. On this theory, then, the vision of Rev. 20:4–6 means that the spirit of the martyrs reanimates faithful and valiant believers through all the ages of the Christian dispensation; the souls of the martyrs live again in them as Elijah lived again in John the Baptist, and as Huss lived again in Luther. "This is the first resurrection."

(2) A second postmillenarian view is that the souls of the martyrs are or represent the souls of the redeemed raised to the heavenly life where they reign with Christ as he rules in his kingdom on earth during the thousand years, which stand for the period of the present dispensation. The ascension of the redeemed into heaven is "the first resurrection," and "the rest of the dead" that "lived not until the thousand years should be finished" are all the dead who are raised up at the general resurrection. This view is advocated by Dr. Charles A. Briggs[6] and by Dr. B. B. Warfield.[7]

[6] *The Messiah of the Apostles,* pp. 354–360.

[7] Article on "The Millennium and the Apocalypse" in *The Princeton Review,* 1904, pp. 599–617, and also one on "The Gospel and the Second Coming," in *The Bible Magazine* for April, 1915.

Dr. Briggs says: "This resurrection is to be explained as a resurrection from Hades to Heaven. Those, who have suffered in this world and have been slain, ascend to their thrones in heaven. This is true of each individual in turn. It is true of the whole class. . . . The Millennium corresponds in general with the duration of the church as the triumphing institution of the world in the last complete period of human history." Dr. Warfield says: "What is meant to be conveyed to us by this beautiful description of the holy peace of Christ's saints is probably not prophetic knowledge of an episode in the earthly history of the church, but a deeper sense of the bliss of Christ's people 'safe penned in Paradise.' It is what is called 'the intermediate state,' in other words, which is here symbolically depicted. . . . John is here only saying in symbols what Paul says in more direct language when he tells us that, whether we wake or sleep, we shall all live together with our Lord Jesus Christ in that great day when death is swallowed up in victory (I Thess. 4: 15; 5: 10; I Cor. 15: 39ff)."[8]

This second theory seems to us to come nearer to the purpose of this passage. Let us hold in mind the situation in which John was writing and what he was aiming to do. The Roman persecution was raging, or was about to break out, and martyrs were calmly laying their heads under the executioner's sword and confessors were bravely standing up and declaring their

[8] A similar view is ably set forth by William Milligan in his *Revelation of St. John* and also in his *Book of Revelation.*

Christian faith, rather than drop a little incense on the altar of the pagan priest as a token of their worship of the emperor and receive the priest's mark on their forehead or hand which secured their safety. John was seeking to encourage and sustain these martyrs and confessors that they might be faithful unto the end, and with this in view he saw this vision of "the souls of them that had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, and for the word of God, and such as worshipped not the beast, and received not the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand." Where were these souls of the martyrs and confessors? In heaven, of course. And what were they doing? They were reigning with Christ, associated with him in his kingdom as are all saints in heaven or on earth. This passage, then, held up before those who were about to pass through this fiery trial of martyrdom and confession the vision of these souls in glory as an encouragement and inspiration. This view thus makes this Scripture to signify just what it says: the souls of these martyrs and confessors were reigning with Christ in heaven and therefore were a grand example and incentive to those who were about to follow in their fiery steps. The same principle of encouragement applies to all saints on earth, whatever trials they endure or whatever the age in which they live, but John was not thinking of them: he was thinking only of the martyrs and confessors, and so he mentions only them.

The entrance of these souls into heaven is "the first

resurrection: over these the second death hath no power." This "second death" must be a figurative expression for spiritual death, for no one can die physically a second time; and so "the first resurrection" is a figurative expression for being raised up out of this world into heaven. The statement that "the rest of the dead lived not until the thousand years should be finished" refers to the general resurrection at the end of the world. The "thousand years" is a symbolic number which stands for the indefinite period that intervenes between the first spiritual and the second literal resurrection, and this is the present dispensation.

This seems to us to give a clear and practical meaning to this passage. It shows its pragmatic purpose, which is always the main point in the interpretation of Scripture, even the most symbolical. And it brings this passage into unforced harmony with the general teaching of Scripture as to one general resurrection and with what is set forth on this point in this same chapter of this same book.

3. *The "Thousand Years" and the Premillennial Program.* The "thousand years" is a perplexing point in all interpretations of Rev. 20: 4–6, and few passages in the Bible have stirred up such a dust of controversy. Dr. Nathaniel West, a very learned Presbyterian divine in his way, about thirty years ago published a large volume entitled *The Thousand Years in Both Testaments.* This symbolical period is found nowhere in the Bible except in this passage, yet Dr.

West can find it almost anywhere and everywhere in the Scriptures. Like many premillenarians, he sees "the Old Testament saturated with" his idea and can find allusions to it "in one verse out of every twenty-five." He discovers "no less than six different equivalent expressions" in the Old Testament for this period. As a specimen of the style of reasoning of this author we quote the following, which is only typical of what may be picked up on almost any page: "What we further find is that the 70th of Daniel's 70 weeks is divided into twice 3½ years or twice 1,260 days for the Rise, Reign, and Ruin, of Antichrist, and that the formula, 70 years, *plus* 7 year-weeks, *plus* 62 year-weeks, *plus* our Interval, *plus* 1 year-week, all of which make the 'Two Days' of the visible kingdom of God on earth to its setting up again; that the 'Many Days' of Hosea, which are his 'Third Day,' span 'the 1,000 years' of John; and that all, taken together, exhaust the whole prophetic calendar if we add, hereto, 'Gog's little season,' at the close of the Millennial Age. The formula of the total Æonology is 70 years *plus* 69 year-weeks, *plus* our Interval, *plus* 1 year-week, *plus* the 1,000 years, *plus* Gog's little season."

After reading this over on page 77 several times and meditating upon what it might mean, we were not surprised to read on page 175 this admission: "The whole effect of our discussion, thus far, is to produce the conviction that the stumbling-block in the way of reckoning the 70 Sevens is not in the prophecy itself,

but in our own *ignorance,* 'not knowing the Scriptures,' or in a *false chronology,* or, if not in that, then in a *false mode* of computing the Sevens, and the Genealogies, or in both together. Something is wrong." We do not pretend to understand any of this, except the last sentence; and we are absolutely sure that it is true. We are confident "something is wrong," and we suspect it is due, as the author says, to his "own *ignorance,* 'not knowing the Scriptures,' or in a false *chronology,* or, if not in that, then in a *false mode* of computing the Sevens," only we wonder why it took 175 pages of this kind of thing for the author to find this out. We go farther and suspect that "something is wrong" with the volume from beginning to end; and we feel like exclaiming to the author, "Much learning doth make thee mad!" The whole big book is a monumental mass and marvel of misguided ingenuities, baseless assumptions, fantastical vagaries, and self-inspired dogmatism. Dr. West calls the doctrine that the gospel is to convert the world a "beguiling Lie!" a "fundamental Lie!" and a "Satanic Lie!" for he uses strong language and it is always dangerous to differ from him. Occasionally he falls foul of some of his premillenarian brethren and then he is as furious against them as against the postmillenarians; in fact, for friend or foe to differ from him is to incur instant sentence of exegetical death. Of course most premillenarians have no complicity in or patience with such a style of argument, which is now happily becoming obsolete, but too much

of it is still found in premillenarian literature. All this is adduced to show what an able man obsessed of a theory comes to when he takes to adding and manipulating these sacred numbers: the business quickly runs into absurdities, and almost everybody, except the infatuated calculator himself, sees that "something is wrong," which is plainly due to "ignorance" and "not knowing the Scriptures."

The point we wish to make, however, is that if we grant premillenarians their interpretation of two literal resurrections with a thousand years intervening, they are not out of the woods of difficulty; rather their troubles have just begun. As to the "thousand years" itself, we might suppose that, having gained this period on the ground of literal interpretation, they would adhere to it literally; but not so, they at once begin to manipulate this number and bring out of it all sorts of results. Some hold it represents an indefinite period, which puts them on postmillenarian ground; others, on their principle by which they can at will turn days into years, get out of it 365,000 years, which shows how marvelously elastic and expansive their "literality" is.

They also have many theories as to how the "thousand years" are to be introduced and as to how things are to go on during this period. We have already referred to their distinctions of the "Rapture," the "Tribulation," and the "Revelation," technical terms in their peculiar parlance. The saints are to be caught up in the rapture, but what saints it is not agreed.

Some say that all the dead and living saints will be taken up in the rapture, and others say that only the dead saints or only the martyred dead will be resurrected and caught up; still others limit "the rapture" to a peculiar class known as "the bride of Christ." Some say these saints will be caught up secretly and thus vanish mysteriously from the earth, and others say they will be caught up openly and visibly. There is little agreement as to where the saints will be during the "tribulation," and as to who will pass through this period. When Christ comes with the saints there are differences as to whether he remains hovering up in the air over the earth or comes down upon the earth. Most premillenarians, however, bring Christ and the saints down upon the earth and have them set up the kingdom with its capital in Jerusalem, from which seat they regather the Jews into Palestine and rule the world. Room must be made for David, who is to come back in his literal person and reign over restored Israel forever (Jer. 30:9; Ezek. 37:24–25). The Old Testament prophecies of the kingdom are then to be fulfilled, and this involves the restoration of the temple and the sacrifices in Jerusalem and all the world will be required to go up to that city to worship with these sacrifices every week: how can this be? The conversion of the nations is to be effected, not by the preaching of the gospel, which has been proved powerless to do this work, but by "supernatural power" which "shall be exerted in behalf of this kingdom in the most astounding manner." The

gospel whose good news the angels sang at the birth of Jesus, the gospel that is the glory of the New Testament, the gospel that "is the power of God unto salvation" and has been the regenerating force of all the Christian centuries, has disappeared from this scheme.

The difficulties of the "thousand years" multiply without end. Christ and the resurrected saints will have resurrection bodies, which are not "flesh and blood" but are incorruptible, glorious, spiritual, immortal bodies; yet they live on earth with generations of mortal men in the flesh: how can this be? What kind of world would this be? It is further contended by some premillenarians that these generations of fleshly men will continue to multiply on this earth forever.[9] This "thousand years" is called by some premillenarian writers "the third dispensation," and it certainly is not either the first dispensation under the law of Moses or the second dispensation under the grace of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit.[10] It differs radically from both of these, and it involves conditions that are utterly foreign to the whole existing and revealed plan and will of God.

[9] D. N. Lord, in *The Coming and Reign of Christ,* devotes two chapters to proving "The Perpetuity of the Human Race." This strange doctrine is taught by later premillenarians. See C. K. Imbrie's paper on "The Regeneration" in *Premillennial Essays,* Essay V. The doctrine, however repellent, is logical and necessary on the premillenarian "principle of literality."

[10] "Dispensational truth" is a favorite term in the parlance of some of these writers and appears to designate a peculiar kind of truth known to or at least appreciated only by them.

The premillenarian program of the coming of Christ and the "thousand years" thus grows increasingly complicated and repellent if not impossible as it is worked out. As we attempt to follow all these evolutions and study their complex diagrams and charts that sometimes look like intricate geometrical problems, we are reminded of the epicycles by which the old astronomers explained the movements of the heavenly bodies. They would construct a complicated system of motions that would fit and explain the movements of the planets for a while. But presently the persistent "wanderers," as the very name "planets" means, would wobble and stray from the orbits prescribed by the theoretical curves, and then another crank or epicycle would be added and all would go well again for a time; but finally the whole system broke down under its own weight of absurdity. The premillenarian writers and speculators of the more imaginative and erratic type are ingenious and prolific in inventing devices to make their schemes work. There are "fads" among premillenarians, "little systems" that "have their day and cease to be." All premillenarians are not to be held responsible for these vagaries. Some of the more judicious among them grieve over these fictions of misguided fancy, or look upon them with the same amusement — and pity — that we experience as we study these curiosities of premillenarian literature. There is so much difficulty, however, in constructing a workable premillenarian program of a thousand years intervening between two

resurrections, that such devices are sure to develop; and we turn with relief to the figurative interpretation of "the first resurrection" of Rev. 20:4–6 because it is in accordance with general Scripture teaching and analogy and also because it affords an escape from the program and prospect held out before us by the premillenarian scheme.

CHAPTER X

THE JUDAISM OF PREMILLENARIANISM

Old religions and old forms of religion die hard. Religion, being so deep-seated and sacred, when it becomes institutionalized is the most conservative institution in the world. This is one of its virtues, for it is not good to have our fundamental convictions shallowly planted and easily shaken. But this conservatism has the fault of its virtue when it tenaciously clings to old forms which have served their day and should give way to better things, holding on to the husk when it is empty of corn, to the letter when the spirit is gone. The good is ever the enemy of the better, and the better of the best, and so religion has ever had to contend with outgrown forms that have constricted and tried to strangle its growing life.

1. *The Early Struggle of Christianity with Judaism.* Judaism was the preparatory dispensation that cultivated the soil and sowed the seed for Christianity, the husk for its fruit, the schoolmaster that led the Jews and the world to Christ. It fulfilled a great purpose and served the world splendidly, and this is its everlasting honor. But it slowly grew up into a great ceremonial system that incarnated itself in the priesthood and temple, especially in the temple of Herod,

with its stainless white marble walls crowned with a gilded flashing roof, in which gorgeously-robed priests and singing antiphonal choirs and swinging censers of perfumed incense celebrated the worship of Jehovah with magnificence and pomp. And thus in time the priesthood and temple became a hindrance rather than a help to true spiritual religion. Judaism when Jesus was born was largely an empty husk; it was clinging to the letter and had almost lost the spirit.

Christ came to fulfill all the ceremonies of Judaism, the true Lamb of God who was symbolized in all its sacrifices, the substance of which all these forms were the shadows. With one majestic word of his lips and gesture of his hand he swept Jerusalem with its temple off that mountain-top and off the earth as the exclusive seat and center of worship in the sublime saying: "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father. . . . But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth: for such doth the Father seek to be his worshippers. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4: 21, 23–24).

This was divine prophecy, but then began the human battle to fulfill it. The old system yet had much strength and tenacity and was bound to fight for its life. The struggle began with the opposition of the Jewish church, especially as represented by the scribes and Pharisees, to Jesus himself, because he turned out

to be not the kind of Messianic King and Conqueror for whose coming they were looking. They fell upon Jesus in their fury and crucified him and thought they had made an end of the dangerous heretic and his whole movement; but presently they found, to their consternation, that Christ was back again, and the new religion leaped into life vastly more vigorous and mightier than ever. Christianity triumphed, and Judaism withered into a shriveled survival, which it remains to this day.

But presently it was discovered that the spirit of Judaism was not dead and soon it lifted its head within Christianity itself. An attempt was first made to shut Gentiles out of the gospel kingdom altogether, and then to fasten on Gentile converts the Mosaic ceremonies, and thus to lead them back "to the weak and beggarly rudiments" (Gal. 4:9) and put them under the yoke of Judaism. Many Jewish converts hankered to go back to these things. Some of the first Christian churches were kept in a turmoil over this matter. The Epistle to the Hebrews was written to show these Hebrew converts that the old covenant had "waxed aged" and was "nigh unto vanishing away" (Heb. 8:13), but that Christ had come as "a high priest of the good things to come, through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands" (Heb. 9:11). It was an eloquent and powerful "tract for the times" in this great controversy and perilous day. Paul was a master of logic in this argument (II Cor. 3:7–11) and stood as a tower of

strength in this critical battle. Had the Judaizers in the early Christian church won in their contention, Christianity would have withered along with Judaism as only another Jewish sect. But this internal victory was also magnificently won, and Christianity, loosed from its Jewish swaddling clothes, stood upon its own feet and started off on its continental march, and spread its wings for its worldwide flight.

But Judaism was not even yet wholly dead. It next insinuated itself into Christianity in a more subtle form. It began to develop within the Christian church the ceremonial and official system it had developed in its own priesthood and temple; some of its old seeds and roots remained in the Christian soil; and in time it sprouted and blossomed out again in the hierarchy of Rome and in the cathedral of St. Peter's with its magnificent building and its gorgeous ritualistic worship more splendid than the temple of Solomon or Herod. Judaism reappeared in the officialism and ritualism of Rome. So also the worldly conception of the Jewish eschatological kingdom reappeared in the political organization and power and pomp of Roman Catholicism, and to this day, as Voltaire said, "the Roman Catholic Church is the ghost of the Roman Empire sitting on its grave."

Protestantism was a blow at this system, a reaction against this old Judaism come to life and power again in Roman Catholicism. But Protestantism has itself not wholly escaped from this atavism, and one form in which it has come back is premillenarianism.

2. *Premillenarianism as a Survival of Judaism.* Let us say at once that we do not charge that premillenarians are consciously trying to move the clock of Christianity back to ancient time, purposely endeavoring to lead it back "to the weak and beggarly rudiments" and put it under the yoke of Judaism. All through this book we are not dealing with the personal motives of premillenarians, much less are we imputing to them unworthy motives, but we are dealing with the logic and spirit of their system; and so viewed it is historically and irrefutably a survival or recrudescence of this outworn system. We shall rapidly enumerate some of the points at which this appears.

(1) Premillenarianism is Judaistic in its way of interpreting the Scriptures. It professes to be and prides itself on being literalistic. The New York Prophetic Conference of 1878 and the Chicago Conference of 1886 both announced platforms declaring that "the prophetic words of both the Old and the New Testaments concerning His second coming will be literally fulfilled," and the principle of literal interpretation is insisted on by almost every premillenarian writer, sometimes with some appreciation of its limitations and modifications, but more often in an extreme and undiscriminating way. We are told that "the Bible must mean just what it says," and the very word "figurative" excites the antipathy of some of these writers. Dr. West is savage against "the allegorizers and spiritualizers who follow Augustine." Having laid down this principle, they then carry it

out unflinchingly, turning the poetic pictures of the Hebrew prophets into literal descriptions of the coming kingdom and accepting the absurdest consequences of such interpretation.

These writers sometimes remind us of Luther's mode of argument when he and Zwingle met at Marburg in 1529 to discuss the meaning of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. As they sat down on opposite sides of a table covered with velvet cloth, Luther took a piece of chalk and wrote on the cover the text, from the Latin Vulgate, "Hic est corpus meum," "This is my body," and said, "I take these words literally; if any one does not, I shall not argue but contradict"; and in answer to all Zwingle's arguments he would point to these words as sufficient in themselves to prove his doctrine. He declared: "Christ has said, 'This is my body.' Let them show me a body that is not a body. I reject reason, common sense, carnal arguments, and mathematical proofs. God is above mathematics. We have the word of God; we must adore it, and perform it."[1] The premillenarians often follow this fashion. Such a phrase as "the first resurrection" can mean for them nothing but a literal physical resurrection, and yet in the very next verse (Rev. 20: 5–6) occurs the phrase "the second death," which cannot be a literal second physical death, but must mean a spiritual death. In the face of the plainest cases of figurative language they point

[1] See D'Aubigne's *History of the Reformation,* vol. IV, pp. 95–96, and Lindsay's *History of the Reformation,* vol. I, p. 358.

to their principle, "The Bible must mean what it says."

Now this mechanical literalistic interpretation of the Scriptures was the outstanding feature of the rabbinical study of the Old Testament in the time of Christ. They magnified and exalted the letter of the Scriptures to an extreme and absurd degree. They counted the very letters of their Bible and knew which was the exact middle letter of the whole book! Some words were so magically sacred that they would never pronounce them in reading them but substituted other words in their place. And while thus fastening their eyes on the very letters of Scripture they were often tragically blind to its meaning and spirit. Paul in writing to the Corinthians speaks of himself as a minister "of a new covenant; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life" (II Cor. 3:6). "The Apostle's opponents at Corinth," says *The Expositor's Greek Testament* in its comments on this passage, "were probably Judaizers (11:22), and thus the description of his office as the 'minister of the new covenant' leads him to a comparison and a contrast of the Old Covenant and the New." Just so: there were probably Judaizers in the Corinthian church and they were literalizers who insisted on the letter of Scripture, which killeth, and were missing the spirit, which giveth life. And this indiscriminating extreme literalizing of Scripture has the same results in our day as it had in Paul's day.

It was this literalizing of the Jewish prophecies of

the coming Messiah and his kingdom that led the Jews off into views and hopes of the Messiah that were false and were cruelly disappointed. "The majestic speculations on the origin, activity, and sojourn of the Messiah," says Kohler, "which were a favorite theme of the apocalyptic writers and the Haggadists during the pre-Christian and the first Christian centuries, gave way to a more sober mode of thought, in the disappointment that followed the collapse of the great Messianic movements." [2] The Jews were looking for a conquering Messiah, "marching in the greatness of his strength," trampling his enemies in his wrath with his garments stained with their lifeblood (Isaiah 63:1–4), and because the Messiah came as the meek and lowly Jesus they would not have such a man to reign over them and made way with him in their fury. It was the literal interpretation of their Scriptures that blinded the Jews to their own Messiah so that they will ever be faced with the pathetic record that "he came unto his own, and they that were his own received him not" (John 1:11).

We are therefore forced in all candor to see and to say that premillenarianism is remarkably like Judaism in its literalization of Scripture, and this leads its advocates into the same kind of results as it did the Jews.

We have already indicated the true method of treating Scripture, which is to discriminate the different styles of writing and interpret literal language as literal, and figurative, symbolical, poetic language as

[2] *Jewish Theology*, p. 385.

figurative, and we must be guided in this discrimination by sound judgment and the analogy of general Scripture teaching.[3]

(2) A second point in which premillenarianism is a survival and relic of Judaism is its view of the nature of the kingdom of God. The coming Messianic kingdom for which the Jews looked was set forth in the prophecies of the Old Testament in glowing pictures of triumph and peace and supernatural prosperity and plenty. "The real Messianic hope," says Kohler, "involved the reëstablishment of the throne of David, and was expressed most perfectly in the words of Isaiah" as found in chapter 11:1–8. The Messianic kingdom was to have its central seat in Palestine with its splendid capital in Jerusalem, where was to rule a royal Conqueror who would trample the nations under his feet and rule in righteousness. The Jews were to be the favorites in this kingdom, the nobility or aristocracy in its realm, who would receive the chief offices and sit on thrones. It was this view of the kingdom, taken literally, that prompted James and John to make their request to Jesus that they might "sit, one on thy right hand, and one on thy left hand, in thy glory" (Mark 10:35–45). They thought the kingdom was to be a political one in which all the arts and intrigues of politics would play their part. They wanted to make sure of their preferment and tried to steal a march on the other disciples in order to get ahead of them and get seated on their thrones

[3] See pp. 39–43.

first. And the other disciples "began to be moved with indignation concerning James and John," because they wanted the same thing themselves and did not propose to be crowded out by these ambitious office seekers and wire-pullers. If James and John were cousins of Jesus, they and their mother were trying to use their family connection to get these offices. The whole affair was a political intrigue, and throws a startling light upon the prevailing Jewish conception of the kingdom. This conception was plainly that of a political worldly empire, monarchical in form and aristocratic in spirit, in which place and power were the chief possessions and were to be had as political rewards and personal favors. It was this conception of the kingdom that Jesus clashed with and that crushed him. He himself put it under his feet in his temptation in the wilderness, and he strove earnestly through his whole ministry to root it out of the minds of his disciples; but it remained in their secret hopes and came out in the question they asked Jesus just before his ascension, "Lord, dost thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"

And this is the conception of the kingdom that finds its congenial soil and atmosphere in premillenarianism. The advocates of this doctrine, as we have already seen, take the Old Testament prophecies of the Messianic coming kingdom as describing, not the first, but the second coming of Christ when he is to set up his kingdom just as it is pictured in these prophecies. This is a tremendous dislocation of Scripture, com-

parable to a geological fault in its historic strata, one that would have astonished the ancient, as it does the modern, Jews, and one that has no shadow of foundation in the Scripture itself. The premillenarians carry over into the second advent all these glowing pictures of the prophets and take them in their favorite literal sense. As a result they deny that the kingdom has yet come and affirm that it will not begin until Christ comes to inaugurate it. They locate it primarily in Palestine and set up its capital in Jerusalem where Christ is to reign in person and where his saints are to reign with him. "Jesus will be King," says Rev. Dr. Campbell Morgan, "in as direct and positive a sense as any ruler the world has ever known, but with larger empire and more autocratic sway. He will be Judge as well as King, and the final Arbiter in any disputes that may arise among men": that is, as we understand it, Jesus will settle lawsuits, a business in which he refused to engage when in the world (Luke 12:13–14). We are further told: "In Jerusalem Christ's laws and decisions are to be made and given; and from thence edicts will go forth affecting the whole of mankind."[4] This means, in accordance with the teaching of many premillenarians, that new divine revelations are to be given by Christ in Jerusalem, which will be the new Bible of this new dispensation. The old Bible and the old gospel appear to have dropped out of this scheme as we hear of them no more. All the prophetic visions of supernatural

[4] *God's Methods With Man*, pp. 115, 118.

prosperity and plenty are to be literally realized in this kingdom. Hope is held out that those that have faithfully watched for the second coming will be specially recompensed in this kingdom on earth.[5]

This is not attributing one fact or fancy to premillenarians that they do not teach in their books, and these books are legion. This is their view of the nature of the kingdom. And it is Judaistic. It is the old Jewish eschatology risen out of its grave. It is just a kingdom on this earth with a king and capital and throne and a nobility and subject peoples and offices and rewards, a "larger empire and more autocratic sway." It is political and materialistic, autocratic and despotic. It is just what the Jews were looking for and passionately longed for when Christ came, and it is just what he tried to extirpate and banish. It is passing strange, nineteen centuries after Christ himself denied that his kingdom was of this nature and endeavored so persistently to root such an idea of it out of the hearts and hopes of his disciples,

[5] Both the author of *The Thousand Years in Both Testaments,* in the Preface, and the author of the bulky three-volume *Theocratic Kingdom,* in the Dedication of the third volume, hold out the hope of "recompense" and "repayment" "in His Coming Kingdom" to certain men that are mentioned by name as having rendered "pecuniary aid" in publishing these volumes. It is common enough for premillenarian writers and speakers to claim or intimate that adherents of this faith will receive special recognition in "the millennial kingdom," apparently after the manner of the request of James and John in Mark 10: 35–37, but these authors go beyond this and hand out "honors" if not offices in that kingdom to wealthy friends that have paid for publishing their books.

to find earnest and active Christians advocating this very thing. Judaism was materialistic in its view of the nature of the kingdom, and so is premillenarianism.

(3) Premillenarianism is also logically consistent in advocating the same means for establishing the kingdom as did Judaism. The Hebrew prophets, we have shown,[6] understood in some degree the spiritual nature of the kingdom which they set forth in figurative materialistic terms, and they also knew that it was to be established by "truth in the inward parts" and "not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith Jehovah." They also used figurative materialistic terms of cosmic phenomena ("The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood," Joel 2:31, which Peter understood figuratively, Acts 2:16–21) to express coming judgments, and Judaism seized upon these figures in their literal forms as expressing the great means of establishing the kingdom. In Christ's day the Jews were looking for a literal Conqueror who would come in the greatness of his strength, marshaling armies, crushing Rome and putting all nations under his feet. Conquest by catastrophe and cataclysm brought about by physical force was the program of Judaism.

And this is the program of premillenarianism. We have already adduced the evidence for this and need not quote it at length again. Its expounders expressly teach and make it a corner stone of their system, as, in-

[6] See pp. 52–53.

deed, it logically and necessarily is, that the gospel is not to convert the world (a doctrine which Dr. West brands as "a deep falsehood" and "a fundamental lie") and that it was never intended to do this, but that the world will grow worse and worse under the preaching of the gospel and the work of the Holy Spirit until Christ comes and establishes the kingdom by other means. These other means are not spiritual but carnal. The truth and grace of the gospel and the presence and power of the Holy Spirit drop out of this scheme after the coming of Christ, and we are told that "the kingdom shall be established, not as men vainly imagine by the preaching of the gospel, but by the iron rod that shall smite down all opposition and make the enemies of Christ like the broken pieces of a potter's vessel," and that "his supernatural might shall be exerted in behalf of this kingdom in the most astounding manner." [7] Again this is the old Jewish catastrophic eschatology come to life again. A deeper and sadder relapse from the spiritual means of establishing the kingdom, that Christ taught and used and that the apostles preached and practiced, into Jewish materialistic force could not be imagined. Judaism hoped to establish its kingdom by carnal weapons, and premillenarianism puts its trust in the same means.

(4) A final and the most painful form in which premillenarianism is a recrudescence of Judaism is its doctrine that the temple and sacrifices of the Old Testa-

[7] See pp. 87–88, 96.

ment are to be restored at Jerusalem after the second coming of Christ in the millennial kingdom.

It is one of the plainest universal teachings of the New Testament that the sacrifices of the Mosaic economy were fulfilled in Christ and were then done away as vanishing shadows that prefigured the substance, or as morning stars that heralded the rising sun and were then lost in its light. It is true, as we have seen, that the old ordinances for a time tenaciously clung to the ground and it took earnest resistance to them to clear them away. But this was done. Paul was a power in this controversy as he showed by his masterful logic in his Epistle to the Galatians that under Christ believers were no longer in bondage under the old law: "how turn ye back again to the weak and beggarly rudiments, whereunto ye desire to be in bondage over again? Ye observe days, and months, and seasons, and years" (4:9–10). "For freedom did Christ set us free: stand fast, therefore, and be not entangled again in a yoke of bondage" (5:1). "For our passover also hath been sacrificed," he declares, "even Christ" (I Cor. 5:7), who has "blotted out the bond written in ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us: and he hath taken it out of the way, nailing it to the cross" (Col. 2:14). The Epistle to the Hebrews is one long and conclusive argument that the old ordinances are fulfilled and done away in Christ, "who needeth not daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people: for this

he did once for all, when he offered up himself" (7:27).

Who would ever have expected that in the face of all this teaching and of these earnest efforts to rid the Christian church of these old ordinances that had served their day as the withered and empty husk has served the corn, there would arise among believers in later times a school of interpreters who would teach that the whole Mosaic system, with its temple and central seat of worship and its seasons and feasts and sacrifices, its passover and unleavened bread, its daily peace offerings and bloody burnt-offerings and sin-offerings, its altar streaming with blood and its smoke of incense, was to be restored in Jerusalem after the second coming of Christ? Who could have believed this incredible thing? And yet this very thing has come to pass and now is.

It is probable that there are premillenarians that are unacquainted with the logic and literature of the system and have never heard of this doctrine; and possibly they would be startled and even shocked at the first sight of it. But again we are dealing with logic and literature and not with persons. It is also true that not all the writers of this school hold this doctrine; but the exceptions are few. Of all the premillenarian writers we have examined, only one positively rejects this theory; some are silent about it and some give it a tentative adhesion; but with these exceptions all that discuss it accept it.

This doctrine is first rooted in the logic of the sys-

tem. It is a cardinal principle of premillenarianism that the prophecies of the Messianic kingdom in the Old Testament apply, not to the first, but to the second coming of Christ and to the millennial kingdom he will then inaugurate. This enormous unscriptural dislocation is required by the fact that it is an essential doctrine of premillenarianism that the present dispensation of the gospel will not and cannot convert the world; and if these Messianic prophecies were fulfilled before the second coming of Christ the world would be converted and the kingdom realized before this event, and the whole premillennial scheme would go to pieces. It is a further principle of this system that these prophecies must be interpreted in a literal sense in accordance with its teaching that the Bible means what it says, and to abandon this mode of interpretation in its application to these prophecies would be to concede the principle of figurative interpretation and this again would wreck the system.

Premillenarianism is therefore required by its own logic to take the prophecy of Ezekiel, chapters 40–48, in which an idealized vision of the temple is set forth, including the passover and all the bloody offerings which are expressly commanded (45: 21–25), and transfer it bodily and literally to the millennial kingdom in Jerusalem after the second coming of Christ. And this system must do the same thing with all similar prophecies. Isaiah declares: "And they shall bring all your brethren out of all the nations for an oblation unto Jehovah, upon horses, and in chariots,

and in litters, and upon mules, and upon dromedaries, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, saith Jehovah, as the children of Israel bring their oblation in a clean vessel into the house of Jehovah. . . . And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith Jehovah" (66:20, 23). Zechariah prophesies: "And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations that come up against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, and to keep the feast of tabernacles" (14:16); "and all they that sacrifice shall come."

The inescapable logic of premillenarianism requires that all these and similar prophecies be literally fulfilled in Jerusalem. This is "Judaizing Christianity" (a phrase that originated with Jerome in the fourth century A. D.) with a vengeance. And this is revolting; some premillenarians do revolt at it. Dr. Brown quotes Increase Mather, a premillenarian, as saying: "And a most loathsome work do they perform, both to God and man, that dig up the ceremonies out of that grave where Jesus Christ buried them above sixteen hundred years ago." [8]

But do premillenarians actually hold and teach this doctrine? We shall show that this is a fact, but before doing so let us look at the case of a present day writer who denies this application of premillenarian logic.

[8] *The Second Advent*, p. 371, the quotation being from Mather's *Mystery of Israel's Salvation Explained*, printed in 1669, pp. 113–114.

Dr. G. N. H. Peters, in his *Theocratic Kingdom,* holds that the "kingdom when restored does not require the reintroduction of bloody sacrifice," but the process by which he does this is peculiar and characteristic. Having, in the first volume of his work, laid down the principle of literal interpretation, he must find some way of meeting these prophecies of the future temple and sacrifices. He takes up the case of Ezekiel's prophetic temple and first suggests that the fulfillment of this prophecy is conditioned on Israel's faithfulness, and as Israel proved unfaithful this prophecy will not be fulfilled. However, he feels that this will not do as it contradicts a principle he had laid down in the first volume ("Prop. 18"), and therefore he tries another expedient. This expedient is the following: "It is sufficient to call attention to a mode of speech introduced into the Word which solves all such difficulties. It is a figure of speech called by Lord and others "hypocatastasis" by which one thing is employed as a substitute or equivalent for another. . . . This usage of the word, 'sacrifice' shows that it is employed as *an equivalent* for worship or religious conduct in this dispensation."[9] Did the reader ever see anything more clever? Under the fine camouflage of this precious word "hypocatastasis," a word apparently as "blessed" as "Mesopotamia," is introduced the dreadful "figurative" and "spiritualizing" principle of interpretation to which premillenarians have such a strong antipathy and on which they pour out such

[9] *Theocratic Kingdom,* vol. III, p. 89.

sarcastic invective. Having got his "hypocatastasis" Dr. Peters uses it, as any postmillenarian would, in "spiritualizing" the "sacrifices" of Ezekiel's prophetic temple, and then, having got around this difficulty with as much concealment as possible, the ponderous *Theocratic Kingdom* gets back on its track and goes rumbling along on its accustomed principle of literal interpretation. However, there is no concealing the fact that in adopting this "mode of speech," by whatever old and familiar or new and fearsome name it may be called, a corner stone was removed from the whole premillenarian system; for the same "mode of speech" leads straight to postmillenarianism.

All other premillenarian writers that discuss this point to which we have had access refuse to get under the cover of "hypocatastasis" and unflinchingly follow the logic of their system. It would burden our pages beyond our space to give many quotations from these writers and we can only make a selection. We shall first give in part a few quotations that Dr. Brown gives from writers of his day not accessible to us. "Zion and Jerusalem," says Mr. Fry, "are to be the great source of spiritual blessedness to the whole world. . . . But what most surprises us is, that a ritual of worship, so like the Mosaic ceremonial, should again be restored by divine appointment, rather than institutions more analogous to those of the gospel church; and especially that the *sacrifices of animal victims* should be again enjoined." "In Ezek. 43:26," says Mr. Freemantle, "it is commanded that the priests

shall purge the altar seven days. . . . And upon the eighth day and so forward, the priest shall make the burnt-offerings upon the altar, and the peace-offerings, and God will accept them. . . . Then the song of thanksgiving in Ps. 66 shall resound through the *temple aisle.* . . . 'We will go into thy house with *burnt-offerings;* I will offer unto thee *burnt-sacrifices of fatlings,* with *the incense of rams.*'" [10]

Both Dr. Horatius Bonar and his brother Dr. Andrew Bonar, eminent premillennialists in their day, taught this doctrine. Dr. Horatius Bonar writes: "The temple, the worship, the rites, the sacrifices, have all their center in the Lamb that was slain. To him they point, and of him they speak. Why should they not be allowed to do so in the millennial age, if such be the purpose of the Father? They are commemorative not typical. They are retrospective then, not prospective, as of old. And how needful will retrospection be then, especially to Israel?" [11]

Coming to present day writers, we begin with Dr. Nathaniel West, that Boanerges among premillenarians, to differ from whom is anathema as surely for a premillenarian as for a postmillenarian. Dr. West is never afraid of his own logic and would scorn Dr. Peters' "hypocatastasis." In commenting on chapters 40–48 of Ezekiel's vision he asks: "*Are these also a Millennial picture?* We answer, *Yes.* They can-

[10] *Second Advent,* pp. 360–361. Dr. Brown also quotes other authors to the same effect.

[11] *The Coming and Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ,* p. 222.

not be literalized into the times of the Restoration under Zerubbabel, nor spiritualized into the times of the New Testament church, nor celestialized into the heavenly state, nor allegorized into the final New Heaven and Earth, nor idealized into an oriental phantasmagorical abstraction. . . . That *bloody sacrifices* seem a stumbling block, never can avail to dislodge the section from its place in prophecy or history. The picture is a picture of *restored Israel* from an Exile-point of view, when the Temple was destroyed, the City laid waste by the king of Babylon, Israel's instituted worship wrecked, and the prophet-priest, Ezekiel, was moved by 'the hand of God' to comfort the exiles of Gola." [12]

Dr. S. H. Kellogg is exceedingly cautious in the matter. He argues through pages for a strict literal fulfillment of the Jewish prophecies with reference to Israel, which he refers to the millennium after the second coming of Christ, but when he comes to Ezekiel's temple with its bloody sacrifices he pauses. Yet he goes on to say: "If there is too great difficulty in the interpretation which has been suggested by some eminent evangelical expositors of prophecy, that a special form of service will be ordained for restored and converted Israel in that new dispensation which their conversion will inaugurate,— not after the manner, indeed, of the ancient typical sacrifices, which were done away in Christ, but with a retrospective and sac-

[12] *The Thousand Years in Both Testaments,* pp. 424–425, 426, 432.

ramental intent,— if this, we say, be too hard to be received, as very easily it may be; and if we also reject the interpretation of others, which refers those chapters in the conditional sense to the past, and content ourselves with simply saying that we are not certain what these chapters do mean; does it therefore follow that the whole system of interpretation is false, because in its light we cannot arrive at an infallible understanding of every prediction in the Word of God?" [13] This question reveals the perplexity of Dr. Kellogg's mind, and it also leaves him wavering on the question of the bloody sacrifices in restored Israel.

The author of *Jesus Is Coming* evidently believes in the restored sacrifices, for in Chapter XV, on *Israel Is to Be Restored,* we find in the Scripture proofs "Ezek. Chapters 40 to 48 the New Temple," with the statement, "Nothing has ever yet been built like the temple which Ezekiel describes in chapters 40 to 48, and this includes a definite description of the location of each tribe, as they shall be settled in this great future restoration. See ch. 48." [14] It also includes a definite description of the bloody sacrifices the priests are commanded to offer in it. See chapter 43 : 18-27.

Quotations can be produced to show that the doctrine of restored sacrifices is accepted by Rev. Dr. William B. Riley,[15] Rev. Dr. I. M. Haldeman,[16] Rev.

[13] *The Jews or Prediction and Fulfilment,* pp. 112–113.
[14] *Jesus Is Coming,* pp. 165, 171–172.
[15] *The Evolution of the Kingdom,* p. 48.
[16] *The Coming of Christ,* p. 205.

Dr. C. K. Imbrie (quotes Zech. 14),[18] Rev. Dr. W. G. Moorehead (quotes Zech. 14 as literal),[19] Rev. Dr. C. I. Scofield (quotes Zech. 14: 16–21),[20] and Rev. Dr. R. M. Russell,[21] but we can find space for only one more, and we have reserved him for the last, as being an acknowledged authority of world-wide standing among premillenarians, the Rev. Dr. Campbell Morgan, of London. Dr. Morgan prefixes to his volume entitled *God's Methods with Man* an elaborate variously-colored chart which gives in graphic form his view of the course of the ages from eternity to eternity. The chart and the whole volume display an air of almost supernatural knowledge of these things on the part of the author. He can answer offhand almost any question on the mysteries of this subject with perfect composure and self-assurance, and altogether Dr. Morgan gives us the impression that he takes himself too seriously. In the chart from the creation of man to the birth of Christ runs a red line marked "sacrifice." This red line stops with the period denominated "The Present Age," but begins again and is still marked "sacrifice" at the second coming of Christ and runs through the period denominated "Millennium." The meaning is plain: the Mosaic sacrifices stop with the first and begin again with the second coming of Christ.

[18] Report of New York Prophetic Conference, 1878, pp. 146–147.

[19] Report of the Allegheny Prophetic Conference, 1895, pp. 9–10.

[20] Report of the Chicago Prophetic Conference, 1914, p. 48.

[21] Report of the Chicago Prophetic Conference, 1914, p. 64.

Turning to the chapter on "The Golden Age," we read the following: "Palestine, reinhabited by the nation of Israel, is to be redivided; and each tribe will return, not to the section of land previously occupied, but to a portion which stretches from the seaboard across the land. Jerusalem is to be rebuilt, and will possess a temple far larger and more magnificent than before, the size of which is given by Ezekiel. The city will not merely be the seat of rule exercised over Israel; but the metropolis of government for the world-wide worship of God. In the past its sacrifices and oblations pointed on to Christ; but these, restored in the Millennium, will be offered in memory of the work which Jesus accomplished by his cross." [22] Thus this recognized leader among the premillenarians is outspoken and unequivocal in holding to the restoration of the sacrifices in the millennium; and we know of no one that is more qualified and authorized to speak for this school than this distinguished divine who does no more than follow the logic of the system to its consistent and necessary end.

It will be noticed that Dr. Morgan turns these bloody sacrifices of "the past" into a "memory of the work Jesus accomplished on the cross"; and several other authors we have quoted adopt or incline towards the same view. But this interpretation cannot be allowed on premillenarian principles, because the command given to the priests in Ezekiel's temple is positive that "the priests" shall be given "a young bullock for a

[22] *God's Methods With Man*, pp. 117–118.

sin-offering. And thou shalt take of the blood thereof, and put on the four horns of it, and on the four corners of the ledge, and upon the border roundabout: thus shalt thou cleanse it and make atonement for it" (Ezekiel 43: 19–20). There is no misunderstanding this or transforming it into a "commemorative" ordinance: to do this is to deny that "the Bible means what it says," and is to resort to "apocatastasis," which is nothing less than to relapse into that "allegorizing" and "spiritualizing" which is the root of all error to premillenarianism and is sure to lead to postmillenarianism.

Enough and more than enough has been said to prove that premillenarianism is a recrudescence of Judaism. It is Judaistic in its methods of interpreting Scripture, in its views of the kingdom, in its means of establishing the kingdom, and, above all, in its restoration of the sacrifices after the second coming of Christ. This is indeed renouncing the logic of Paul and "turning back to the weak and beggarly rudiments" and putting our necks again under the Mosaic yoke of "bondage." This is turning the clock of religious development back two or three thousand years. It is putting the altar back in Jerusalem and going back even to "the blood of bulls and goats." If any premillenarians pause at this or say that they do not hold it, we must repeat that we are not dealing with individuals but with the logic and literature of the system, and there can be no doubt about whither the logic leads and what the representative writers teach.

Truly old forms of religion die hard. Judaism has strange tenacity and still clings to the Christian church. The recent fall of Jerusalem out of Mohammedan into Christian hands has greatly revived among premillenarians the hope of a return of Christ with his kingdom to that sacred city and a restoration of the Jews to their holy land. But revolutions never go backward. The clock of religious progress moves forward. Judaism is a withered husk: the corn has gone out of it. Jerusalem is a splendid memory. The eagle, once it gets out, can never be crowded back into its shell. Christianity has taken its flight from Mount Zion and never will it officially go back there. Jesus himself swept his kingdom off that mountain-top as its central seat and released it to go into all the world and make disciples of all nations that men everywhere may worship the Father in spirit and in truth.

It is with a sense of relief that we turn from this premillenarian program and prospect to the true Christian view: "But ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, . . . and to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better than that of Abel" (Heb. 12:22, 24). The whole argument of the Epistle to the Hebrews, as we have seen, is that the old dispensation is fulfilled in the new and has now vanished as "a shadow of the good things to come" (10:1). Paul with one stroke of his pen "spiritualized" the whole Old Testament economy when he wrote, "And if ye are Christ's, then

are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise" (Gal. 3:29). And he wrote some very significant words of those that were Judaizers in his day: "For until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remaineth, it not being revealed unto them that it is done away in Christ. But unto this day, whensoever Moses is read, a veil lieth upon their heart. But whensoever it shall turn to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit" (II Cor. 3:14–18). Peter also "spiritualized" the Old Testament and buried the Jewish eschatology when he wrote, "Ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (I Pet. 2:5). This is the way the New Testament throughout spiritualizes the Old. This is "the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Rom. 8:21); and when we read these premillenarian interpretations and arguments we hear Paul's earnest and eloquent voice ringing across all these centuries and bidding us, "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (Gal. 4:1).

CHAPTER XI

SUMMARY OF OBJECTIONS TO PREMILLENARIANISM

We shall now gather together a summary of objections to premillenarianism, repeating the main points we have already made.

1. *It Is Unsound in Its Methods of Handling Scripture.* Its principle of literal interpretation is right when the literal is the proper sense of Scripture. But it goes beyond this when it insists on interpreting every Scripture in its literal sense, or at least every Scripture that suits its theory when so interpreted. Its principle that "the Bible means just what it says" is unsound and often misleading. The Bible does not always mean what it says, but it does always mean what it signifies. Figurative, symbolic and poetic language is as legitimate and necessary a mode of speech to convey meaning to human minds as is the most literal prose. The Bible uses all kinds of literary forms to express "the manifold wisdom of God." Premillenarianism presses literal interpretation too far and we believe it thereby often "wrests" Scripture from its true meaning.

Premillenarianism is also unsound in the way it appeals to Scripture that seems to support its views and then glides over or ignores Scripture that contradicts

or refuses to fit into its theory. It is an extremely selective doctrine, picking out what suits it and passing over what does not fit its theory. It is composed of Scripture shreds and patches instead of being woven of all Scripture threads on a continuous and consistent pattern. It chiefly rests on one highly figurative passage, which it uses to explain other clearer passages, instead of using other clearer passages to explain this obscure Scripture. It frequently tears passages out of their connection and violates the principles of historical interpretation. It introduces an enormous and utterly unjustifiable dislocation between the Old Testament and the New when it hoists the Hebrew prophecies of the Messianic kingdom clear over the first advent of the Messiah into the second coming of Christ. A glaring instance of its unsound and untrustworthy handling of Scripture is its systematic and studied neglect of and almost total blindness to what is probably the most important and decisive passage in the whole Bible bearing on this subject, the great commission of Christ himself as given in Matthew 28: 18–20. This is something that calls for explanation from the responsible leaders of this school.

2. *It Has Wrong Conceptions of the Kingdom.* It denies that the kingdom of God is yet present in the world and affirms that it will not be inaugurated until Christ comes. This view, which is so contrary to general Christian understanding, runs counter to the explicit teachings of the Scriptures, which declare that the kingdom of God is now within us. Premillena-

rianism also views the kingdom as originating in a cataclysm at the coming of Christ, rather than by a process of growth, and affirms that it is to be established, not by the present agency of the gospel and work of the Holy Spirit, but by a manifestation of supernatural power. Its views of the location and nature of the kingdom as set up at Jerusalem are not in accordance with its spirituality as taught by Christ and the apostles.

3. *It Has Narrow Views of the Coming of Christ and of Watching for This Event.* Premillenarianism virtually sees only one coming of the Lord in the Scriptures, and the simple presence of the word "come" in a passage is often enough, in its view, to make it refer to his final coming. It overlooks the other ways and times in which Christ comes and is continually coming in judgment and providence and especially in the outpouring of his Holy Spirit and to the believer in death. These comings are not the final advent of Christ, but they are each one named and treated in the Scriptures as a coming of Christ, and any consideration of this event which leaves these out of view is incomplete and misleading.

Premillenarianism is also narrow in its doctrine of watching for the coming of Christ. It confines the duty of watching to the final coming of the Lord and thereby overlooks the duty of watching for other forms of his coming. Its advocates with few exceptions hold to the "any moment" imminence of this event and resolve watching into some kind of expec-

tancy. But the Scriptures teach that watching is waiting and attending each one to his own business. Some of the comings of the Lord are always imminent and watching for them consists in being in a state of readiness for them, but the final advent is a remote event and cannot be awaited with expectancy; yet we may watch for it in the sense of working for its final consummation.

4. *It is Judaistic.* Judaism died hard and remnants of it long clung to the Christian church. Premillenarianism is one of these survivals. It is Judaistic in that it presses the literal interpretation of the Scriptures to an extreme degree, intent on what Scripture says rather than on what it signifies. It is Judaistic in its view of the kingdom as an earthly empire with its capital at Jerusalem and a vast hierarchy of ecclesiastical and political government extending out over the world. It is Judaistic in its view of the means to be used in establishing this kingdom, which means are not the truth and grace of the gospel as energized by the Holy Spirit, but the bodily presence of Christ and a catastrophic outburst of supernatural power. And it is Judaistic in its doctrine that the feasts and sacrifices of the Mosaic economy are to be restored at Jerusalem in the millennial kingdom, by which it goes back to the "weak and beggarly rudiments" of the old dispensation, even to the "blood of bulls and goats."

In these respects premillenarianism, like Roman Catholicism, is a recrudescence of Judaism. It has a delight in the picture language of ceremonies that

were designed for the religious childhood of the race and is fascinated with the pageantry and pomp of a gorgeous ritualistic and royal establishment. It hankers after a splendid temple and a great hierarchical system in Jerusalem, and some of its advocates appear to have their hopes set on its honors and offices. It is a resuscitation of the old Jewish eschatology and a relapse into religious materialism.

5. *It Depreciates the Gospel and the Holy Spirit.* We do not say or believe that its advocates mean to do this, but this is the practical effect of their theory. They declare that the gospel does not have the power to convert the world and was never intended to do so; but the Scriptures teach otherwise. Christ taught that his gospel is to convert the world in the parables of the Leaven and the Mustard-seed and especially did he teach this in his great commission, which, if the gospel does not have the power and was not intended to convert the world, is a futile command and a gigantic delusive dream. Paul held that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation, and he was always thinking in universal terms. Premillenarianism does not expect much of the gospel in this dispensation and pins its faith to other means of establishing the kingdom of God. We value things by what we think they will do, and as measured by this standard premillenarianism puts on the gospel no such estimate of its worth and worldwide blessing as the angel of the Lord did in announcing the birth of Jesus, " Behold, I bring you

good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people" (Luke 2:10).

6. *It is Pessimistic.* Premillenarians usually deny this charge with considerable vehemence and it appears to be a tender point with them, but the facts support it. The logic of premillenarianism is inherently pessimistic, for it teaches that the world is essentially and hopelessly evil and cannot grow better under the preaching of the gospel but will grow worse and worse so that the worst is ever yet to come, until Christ appears to cut its present dire disorder short in judgment and destruction. It would be hard to imagine a theory that would be more pessimistic in principle as it relates to the present dispensation of the world. What could be more destructive and fatal to the morale of an army than to keep telling it that it could never win a victory but was sure always to meet defeat?

This logic is abundantly borne out in the literature of premillenarianism. More depressing books we have never read; more dismal prospects we have never seen. Some of these writers revel and riot in the very blackness of darkness in depicting the present condition and future outlook of the world and especially of the church. Dr. Nathaniel West here dips his pen in his blackest ink and writes in his most sarcastic and vitriolic style. Italics and capitals and exclamation points will not express his violent aversion to "progress" and "civilization." "Professedly Christian men shall do the Devil's work teaching this same

method of '*progress,*' and women, too, shall assist to spread the fascination. The very best thing God has given us, *His own Word,* they will denounce as 'Pessimism,' teaching an 'Optimism' born from its perversion. . . . A varnished lie is worse than naked poison. 'Great Babylon,' bearing the Christian name, a church at every corner, a preacher on every street, is worse than the Chaldean City whose king was God's rod to 'destroy, and make a hissing, and a desolation, of Judah' *the Messianic State* of the old Civilization." "The Beast is still unchanged in its heart, anti-christian still, notwithstanding its Christian order, culture, and civilization; a civil structure accepting Christianity externally, the Church accepting the World internally, both parties meeting half-way, the Church and the World making mutual concessions, the Beast Christianized, the Church Bestialized, she the loser, it the gainer, proud intellectual culture, science, and wealth, of Christendom, leading thousands away from, and preventing others from coming to, the knowledge of Christ." "Herein consists the *gigantic lie and narrow mindedness* of our generation, that our *civilization* is thought to be the highest thing, accepted as a surrogate for grace, and for regeneration by the Spirit of the living God." [1]

Another writer at the close of two of the darkest chapters black ink could write on "Civilization" and "Civilization — Even in America" quotes with approval "a noted specialist" who declares that on ac-

[1] *The Thousand Years in Both Testaments,* pp. 439–457.

count of " drink, drugs, mad race for gain, mammon worship, neglect of religion, over-exertion of physical endurance, mental gluttony, high nervous tension, child labor, and women as mothers and wage earners, the entire race will be insane in a few centuries." And he says, " Our peace congresses would save themselves much mortification if they were to consult the Scriptures concerning the coming era of peace," [2] by which we understand he means to assert the hopelessness of all such means of improving civilization and to intimate that we should cease such efforts and look for a shorter way of regenerating the world. Our very charities and philanthropies are represented as the works of the devil.[3]

The degeneracy and hopeless corruption of the world and the church are standing " signs of the times " with premillenarians of every generation that the coming of Christ is " at hand." If " by their fruits ye shall know them " is a principle to be applied to this doctrine, then the dark hue and bitter taste of the books of these writers prove it to be pessimistic.

We have considerable evidence at hand that many premillenarian pastors are pessimistic in their preaching and produce a depressing effect upon their congregations, but we do not care to go into this phase of the matter because pessimism or optimism is so largely

[2] C. F. Wimberly, *Behold the Morning!* pp. 17–35. For a very dark picture of "this judaized, paganized, world subsidized church," see I. M. Haldeman's *Coming of Christ*, chapters V–IX.

[3] Terribly pessimistic is Dr. S. J. Andrews in *Christianity and Anti-Christianity.*

temperamental and any such reasoning is unsafe. This state of mind perhaps more often depends on a man's liver than on his logic. Some premillenarians are personally optimistic, and some postmillenarians are pessimistic. Men are often delightfully illogical and inconsistent in their practice as compared with their theory, and, anyway, we are not dealing with persons but with principles in this book. We judge this doctrine only by its logic and its literature, and by this test we have found it distinctly and often deeply pessimistic.

But are not premillenarians as active and earnest in foreign missions as any other class of Christians, and in view of this fact how can they be charged with pessimism? We gladly admit and admire the foreign missionary zeal of premillenarians, and they are not inconsistent in this zeal, for they hold that the gospel must be preached in all the world. But they also hold that it is to be preached "for a testimony" without any promise or hope of its converting the world; and so their outlook upon the heathen world is still dark, for they have no faith or hope that it will ever be Christianized. Furthermore, their view lends itself to a hurried and superficial kind of foreign missionary work, hastening through pagan lands and cities and proclaiming the gospel so as to fulfill the command to preach it "for a testimony" and thus prepare the way for and hasten the coming of the Lord. This theory has been deliberately declared and practiced by some premillenarian foreign missionaries.

Such a form of missionary work is not interested in the deeper and slower work of laying foundations in schools and colleges and hospitals on which to build in future years, but aims at short ends and quick results in bearing witness. The "Inland Missions" and the work of the "Missionary Alliance" carried on mainly by premillenarians are, in some degree, of this superficial nature, whereas our great foreign missionary boards are looking far into the future and laying solid foundations for a hundred or a thousand years. We are not disparaging the self-sacrifice of the workers of the "Missionary Alliance," for it is worthy of high commendation and admiration, but the kind of work they are doing is influenced by their views of the coming of the Lord.

7. It has been and is attended with Harmful Results. We wish to be careful and discriminating in stating this point, because many premillenarians have been and are eminent in good works, sane in judgment, distinguished in piety, and earnest and abundantly fruitful in service. But judged by its effects this doctrine has been and is marked by harmful tendencies and results.

One of these tendencies is its proneness to engage in calculations and predictions of the signs and time of the coming of Christ. All the Christian centuries are strewn with the wrecks of these set times of Christ's coming, which in some instances were attended with fanatical folly. The nineteenth century was prolific in them, and the twentieth century bids

fair to be equally fertile. Nearly all premillenarian writers engage in this business. It seems to have a fatal fascination for them so that while they may repudiate and denounce these calculations and set dates, yet they cannot keep from slipping into this business themselves. Even so cool and cautious a writer as Dr. S. H. Kellogg falls into this pit,[4] and Dr. Campbell Morgan in the very same paragraph and breath in which he affirms we do not know when this age will end yet cannot refrain from saying in the next sentence, "While that is so, the signs of the times seem to indicate in the most definite manner that our age now nears its close. The general unrest plainly points to the coming of Jesus." [5]

The present war has stirred up these calculators and prognosticators of the signs of the times to the highest pitch of foresight and prediction, excitement and self-assured certainty. They can read the whole story of the war and its outcome in Daniel or Revelation and, as one eminent premillenarian said to us, "can tell you all about the war." Now there is not one word in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation about this war, not one. There is no more an allusion in the Scriptures to the battle of the Marne or Verdun than there is to Waterloo or Gettysburg, or to the Kaiser than to Napoleon. This war is only one among a thousand that have taken place since the seer of Patmos saw his vision on that lonely isle. There is noth-

[4] *The Jews or Prediction and Fulfillment*, pp. 257–258, 274–275.
[5] *God's Methods with Man*, p. 93.

ing unusual in the present state of the world as regards this subject. Dr. Morgan's "general unrest" that "plainly points to the coming of Jesus" has disturbed and distressed all the generations and thrown all the centuries into turmoil. The fallacy and the folly of these calculations and predictions are among the harmful tendencies and results of this doctrine.

But it has deeper harmful tendencies in the "unrest" and emotionalism and distraction which it itself excites. This was its effect in the very first Christian church into which it was introduced. Paul, having announced the coming of Christ in his First Epistle to the Thessalonians, the first epistle he wrote, found that it had seized upon the imagination and fears of some of the emotional members of that church so as to distract it, and he hastened in a second epistle to correct this misunderstanding and to quiet their excited minds in words that are appropriate and wholesome advice to some church members and premillenarian leaders in this day, admonishing them that "ye be not quickly shaken from your mind, nor yet be troubled, either by spirit, or by epistle as from us"— or, we might interject, by any premillenarian proclamation of eminent London divines[6]—"as that the day of the Lord is just at hand; let no man beguile you in any wise: for it will not be, except the falling away come first, and the man of sin be revealed" (II Thess. 2: 1–3). This doctrine has frequently erupted in emotionalism and fanaticism in the history of the church.

[6] See pp. 25–26.

Montanism in the second century, the Anabaptists in Germany and the "Fifth Monarchy Men" in England were extreme instances of such evil outbreaks.

Such outbreaks have occurred in our own time. "Some sixteen years ago," wrote Rev. Dr. J. F. Berg in 1859, "one of these periodical visitations afflicted our own country. We had expounders of prophecy, who were adepts in arithmetic also, and who figured out the very date of the second coming of Christ. Some of us remember, it was fixed, most authoritatively, as an event in the calendar of the year 1843. The delusion, we do not say the *imposture,* for that would imply conscious fraud, but the delusion infected thousands in this community. If we are not mistaken, it troubled the Baptists more than any other Christian denomination, probably owing to the fact that, in this instance, the prominent advocate of the error, known as Father Miller, was one of their persuasion." [7]

And this doctrine is not free from harmful results in our own churches. It lends itself to a highly emotional type of religious experience. It gives something definite to look for as immediately impending, and this charges life with portentous possibilities. It is an aid to the emotional evangelist to move people to take his hand as an indication of their desire to flee from the imminent day of wrath. It finds a congenial atmosphere in the crowded tabernacle with its heated contagious air and audience easily caught and swept by hysterical appeals and passions. It produces in

[7] *The Second Advent of Jesus Christ Not Premillennial,* p. 24.

some people a peculiar type of piety that seems unnatural and forced as though it were reared in a religious hot-house. The pietistic flavor and fervor of many premillenarian books do not appeal to us. Some of these writers seem too self-conscious and unctuous; they can hardly conceal and some of them boldly reveal their consciousness that they are more loyal to Christ than those that do not hold this doctrine and some of them appear to think that they are his favorites. In some instances they have and display that "gratitude that is a lively expectation of favors to come."

The effect of this doctrine is unhappy in some churches and communities. It is in some instances a divisive spirit. Its advocates have a great zeal for propagandism, and their zeal is sometimes not conspicuous in knowledge. Not a few premillenarians cannot rest easy as long as their brethren do not accept their doctrine and they are eager to convert them. The pessimistic spirit of the system does not fail to do harm in some churches. Some pastors that have had large experience with it declare that it is a blight.

In this connection we are permitted to quote from a personal letter from the Rev. William Robert King, D.D., pastor of the First Presbyterian church of St. Louis, Mo., who writes out of an extensive personal experience:

"Premillenarianism has a paralyzing effect upon the church's activity. The tendency is for the church that becomes obsessed with it to become extremely individualistic and narrow in its activities. The social

side of the gospel and the kingdom message are ignored. This makes it very difficult to do anything like a constructive piece of church work in a coöperative way along the lines of social reform and civic betterment. They have no concern for the church's responsibility for the world as a world. For example, we find it impossible to interest the premillenarian churches of our city in the work of our Church Federation in any vital and effective way.

" This type of theology is very pessimistic and fatalistic. The world, according to these people, is getting worse and worse, ' thank the Lord! ' The gospel is a failure so far as saving the world is concerned. Everything is bad, nothing is worth while. The whole thing is a flat failure and the sooner it is over the better. It is the rankest type of pessimism, and is a wet blanket over anything that is proposed in church work along modern lines. This is one of the strongest indictments against it. It discredits the church, belittles the power of the gospel and dishonors the Holy Spirit. It makes his work a failure and confesses him to be unequal to the task for which he was sent into the world.

" As to its effect upon missions, its advocates claim to be missionary enthusiasts and this is true. But for what purpose and with what point of view? They operate on the theory that all the church has to do is to ' witness ' (and they have a very superficial conception of the meaning of ' witnessing ') and to gather out of the world the ' ekklesia ' or church. They send mis-

sionaries to fulfill a command and to fulfill a condition of the Lord's return, and not to redeem, regenerate, rehabilitate and recreate a lost, down-trodden, benighted people, and lift a nation or nations up into the the blessings of civilization."

We wish to repeat the caution that these allegations of the harmful tendencies and consequences of this doctrine do not apply equally and indiscriminatingly to all its advocates and to some of them we can testify that they do not apply at all. Some of its advocates repudiate and lament the vagaries of visionaries and fanatics as much as anybody. But the general and logical effect of the doctrine has been and is attended with such results, and this fact stands as an objection against it.

Is premillenarianism, then, all error with no truth at all in it? Can no good come out of this Nazareth? It is not the intention of this book to give any such impression. Of course premillenarians as a class hold the fundamental doctrines of our evangelical faith; and even their distinctive doctrines are not all error, for no pure error could gain any currency and there is always some truth mixed in with every error, and it is this truth that gives the error its plausibility and persistence. Premillenarians emphasize the doctrines of the kingdom of God and the coming of Christ, and these are fundamental truths; the errors in the system are its imperfect and perverted views of these vital realities.

CHAPTER XII

SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR POSTMILLENARIANISM

In a similar way we shall give a summary of the reasons for postmillenarianism.

1. *It is Based on a True and Broad Interpretation of Scripture.* Postmillenarianism takes its stand on the Word of God and believes that its doctrine is only a systematized transcript of Scripture teaching on this subject. We do not forget that premillenarianism makes the same claim, and the examination of the Scripture teaching and the general course and total outcome of the argument must decide between these two claims. Postmillenarianism does not have its "seat" in one passage of Scripture and that a highly figurative one. It explains dark Scripture by clear, and not clear Scripture by dark. It is based on a comparison and consensus of all Scripture and is constructed according to the analogy of faith. It interprets literal language as literal, and figurative language as figurative.

2. *The Old Testament Fulfilled in the New.* Postmillenarianism holds that the Old Testament is fulfilled in the New, the lamb of sacrifice in the Lamb of God, the altar in the cross; and in the same line it holds that

the Jewish prophecies of the Messiah are fulfilled in Christ, and that the prophecies of the Messianic kingdom apply to and are being fulfilled in the kingdom of God as it is now being established in the world. In proof of this application and in disproof of the tremendous upheaval and dislocation of Scripture in the premillenarian theory that these prophecies of the Messianic kingdom apply, not to the first, but to the second coming of Christ, we point to the general teaching of Jesus himself (Luke 4: 16–21; 24: 27), to Peter's declaration that the prophecy of Joel as to the outpouring of the Spirit "in the last days" was fulfilled at Pentecost (Acts 2: 16), to James' express argument at the council in Jerusalem that "the tabernacle of David" was built "again" in the Christian dispensation (Acts 15: 14–16), to Paul's repeated defense of this truth (Gal. 3: 29), and to the whole argument of the Epistle to the Hebrews which is that the old economy has vanished as "a shadow of good things to come" (Hebrews 10: 1). Premillenarianism is constantly scandalized at the "spiritualizing" of these Messianic prophecies in their application to the present dispensation, but this spiritualizing is effected in the New Testament itself and is one of its foundation principles. It is true that many of these prophecies when so applied must be taken poetically and not literally, but we believe the prophets themselves were poets and understood their own figures of speech, as Peter and James and Paul understood them in their day, although the Jews themselves in Christ's day had literalized and

materialized them into crass Judaism; and premillenarianism is logically driven with its literal interpretation of these prophecies into the same ditch of religious materialism. It is further true that many of these prophecies are as yet only partially and often only very faintly realized, but time is long, a thousand years are with the Lord as one day, and they run through the ages as one "increasing purpose" and more and more will be realized as the kingdom of God grows and leavens the whole mass of humanity, or as the gospel makes disciples of all nations and baptizes them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

3. *Spirituality of the Kingdom.* Postmillenarianism holds to a Scriptural conception of the kingdom of God as being spiritual in nature, having its seat and throne in the heart, as opposed to a worldly ecclesiastical and political empire with an earthly capital and all the pageantry and pomp of royalty. It holds that this kingdom is a spiritual society of the nature of a social democracy in which there are no aristocratic or privileged classes, but all are kings and priests unto God. This kingdom is now present in the world and yet it is also future, for it has a history dating from the first entrance of the Spirit of God into the human heart and rolling forward into the future and finally merging in the eternal state.

4. *Growth of the Kingdom.* This kingdom is a growth of mixed good and evil, intensive and yet extensive as it develops its principles to their logical limits

and fruits and pervades all human institutions and transforms the world; a gradual growth like that of the seed or the morning dawn, yet attended with catastrophic crises, after the manner of the blooming of the plant, or of the storm or the earthquake as it breaks in upon the quiet and gradual processes of nature. Such crises attend the growth of the kingdom along the whole path of its history and will culminate in the final crisis of the second advent and end of the world.

5. *The Conversion of the World.* Postmillenarianism holds that the world will be practically Christianized under the ministration of the gospel and the work of the Holy Spirit in this dispensation; and the realization of this ideal will be the fulfillment of the prophecies of the kingdom in both the Old and the New Testaments; and this will be the millennium, a term which is not found in Scripture, but may be used in this sense. Postmillenarianism does not hold that the kingdom of God even in its millennial fullness and power will be wholly free from evil, but it believes the leaven will leaven the whole lump and the kingdom become a great tree and fill the world. Evil will ever remain in this world, and at times there will be outbreaks of it, and prophecy indicates that there will be such an outbreak at the very end of the world.

6. *The Means of Establishing the Kingdom.* Postmillenarianism holds that the kingdom of God will not be established by the bodily coming and presence and power of Christ, but that it is now being established by his spiritual presence in his truth and grace as ener-

gized by the Holy Spirit. It believes that the conversion of the world under the preaching of the gospel is the express command and meaning and promise of the great commission of Christ himself. Instead of the bodily presence of Christ being necessary for the establishment of the kingdom in the conversion of the world, he himself declared that it was better that he should leave the world in order that the Holy Spirit might come and more universally and effectively do this work. This point is the most distinctive difference between premillenarianism and postmillenarianism, the one holding that Christ must come before the world will be converted, and the other holding that the world will be converted before Christ comes in his final advent.

7. *Various Forms of the Lord's Coming.* Postmillenarianism holds that the final advent is not the only coming of Christ, but that he is continually coming in judgment and providence and in his Spirit and to the believer in death.

8. *Watching is Working.* Postmillenarianism opposes to the premillenarian doctrine of constant expectancy of the coming of Christ the Scriptural teaching that watching is waiting and working in readiness for his coming in all its forms and times, whether in the preparatory comings of his providence and Spirit or in the final advent at the last day.

9. *One General Resurrection and Judgment.* Postmillenarianism holds that the Scriptures teach that

there is to be one general resurrection and judgment, when "the dead, the great and the small," shall stand before the throne, and every one shall be judged according to his works.

10. *It is not Judaistic.* Postmillenarianism holds that Judaism was a schoolmaster to lead the Jews and the world to Christ, but that it has now done its work and has vanished away. Judaism is only a withered husk. Jerusalem is a sacred memory. Christianity has taken its worldwide flight from that city and will never officially go back to it. Postmillenarianism rejects with aversion and loathing the teaching of eminent representative premillenarians that the Jewish feasts and sacrifices are to be restored in Jerusalem when Christ comes, as a reversion to the "weak and beggarly" husks of Judaism.

11. *It is Optimistic.* Postmillenarianism is optimistic in that it believes that Christ is now exercising all the power existing in heaven and on earth to make disciples of all nations and that he will be with his disciples always, even unto the end of the world, to accomplish this plan and purpose; and therefore its adherents can labor at this immense, age-long task with faith and hope and inspiration, believing it can and will be done. Postmillenarianism does not look on the dark side of the world and see and intensify only its shadows, but it sees its brighter side and sees it shining more and more unto the perfect day. Its views of the world are not simply descriptive but comparative. It

is optimistic not so much because of what the world is to-day, but because of what it believes it will be to-morrow.

12. *Wholesome and Fruitful in Results.* Postmillenarianism holds that its doctrine as to the kingdom and coming of Christ, being Scriptural and true, is therefore good, and that experience has shown that it is wholesome and fruitful in practical results. While it avoids feverish emotionalism and excitement, yet it charges life with all the weighty and solemn responsibility of working for a present Christ as well as of watching for a coming Lord, and it makes to-day big with all the consequences that will follow in the imminent to-morrow. It holds its conviction with confidence and quietness and is ready to give reasons for its faith, but it is not propagandist. It has never disturbed the church and excited the ridicule of the world with vain and foolish calculations and predictions of times and seasons. It does not know more than did Christ himself as to when he would come again. It cannot read "all about the war" in Daniel or Revelation, and it does not use the Bible as a kind of book of magic to solve all mysteries in the heaven above or on the earth or under the earth. It does not grow excited over the fall of Jerusalem into Christian hands and announce to the world that "the present crisis points toward the close of the times of the Gentiles." It has no mystical or magical arithmetic and almanac by which it can figure out the future, and it is content to leave hidden things with God. It holds that the

true watching is working for Christ, that it is our business to "occupy till he comes." And therefore it strives to be diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. It does not for one moment think it has any monopoly of the present grace or the future favors of the Lord. We do not doubt or disparage the Christian character and faithfulness of brethren that hold a different view and we wish to maintain the unity of the faith in the bond of peace and to let every one be fully persuaded in his own mind (Rom. 14:5).

13. *History and Scholarship.* Finally, the course of history and the weight of scholarship are favorable to the postmillenarian view. We are aware that this is a delicate point as one's judgment on it is largely influenced by his own position, but we venture to assert that the drift of both history and scholarship has been steadily in this direction. There has been an age-long debate on this subject, but it has not all been in vain and it is getting somewhere. The historic creeds of the church, the Apostles', the Nicene, the Athanasian, the Augsburg, the Westminster, and many others, all affirm or imply the postmillenarian doctrine by affirming one general resurrection and judgment. The faith of the church is also much broader and deeper than any of its formal creeds, and we think it has drifted in its thought and life more and more towards the postmillenarian view.

Granting that in the first two or three Christian centuries the premillenarian view had the start, if not the majority, yet we see that it soon lost ground and has

never since regained its position or approached being the dominant faith of the church. Without discounting their numbers and faith and zeal, we think it is not below the truth to say that premillenarians are to-day a comparatively small factor in the church, although they make themselves heard more than some others.

The drift of scholarship away from premillenarianism has been equally marked. Formerly it was held by scholars of the first rank, but for reasons given earlier in this book,[1] their number has steadily decreased and to-day very few professional biblical scholars advocate it. It is doubtful if there is a Hebrew or Greek scholar of the rank of Godet or Tregelles or Alford that holds it to-day. The entire weight of scholarship as represented by such authoritative works as *The Expositor's Greek Testament, The International Critical Commentary,* Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible,* and *The Encyclopaedia Britannica,* is against it. To this is to be added the significant fact that practically all the professors in our theological seminaries of all denominations reject this theory. We are aware that this point has small weight with premillenarians, especially with those of a certain type and temper that are suspicious of or hostile to modern learning, but it is fraught with more serious consequences for their view than they think, and it is likely to tell against it more and more in the future.

[1] Pages 32–34.

CHAPTER XIII

IS THE WORLD GROWING BETTER?

Our subject comes to its climax with this question; for it is the dividing ridge and watershed between two opposing views of the world: the one holding that the world, though mixed with some good, is yet fundamentally evil and will grow worse and worse; and the other holding that the world, though mixed with some evil, is yet fundamentally good and will grow better and better; the one pessimistic, and the other optimistic; the one premillenarian, and the other postmillenarian. Let us gather what light we can see on this subject and focus it on this point.

1. *The Bible is not Pessimistic.* Premillenarian writers hold that the Bible teaches that the world, already essentially bad, will grow worse and worse until it plunges into destruction at the coming of Christ. Is this view true?

Undoubtedly the Bible paints dark pictures of the world. Its first leaf is crimsoned with a murdered brother's blood, and its last pages are lurid with the smoke and blood of burning cities and world battles, and all the way through it is splattered with the stains of crime and vice. It is such a book because it is an

honest book, a photograph, impartial and pitiless as the sunlight, of the world, and of the world as it was from two to many thousands of years ago when it was far worse than it is now. But though the Bible boldly puts down the blackest blots on its pages, yet it does not teach that the evil will outgrow the good so that the world will ever grow worse and worse.

One of the favorite passages that are adduced to prove that the present world will grow worse and worse is Paul's description of it in the third chapter of his Second Epistle to Timothy. "But know this," he says, "that in the last days grievous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, haughty, railers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, implacable, slanderers, without self-control, fierce, no lovers of good, traitors, headstrong, puffed up, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; holding a form of godliness, but having denied the power thereof." Having enumerated this catalog of vices he immediately admonished Timothy, "from these also turn away" (II Tim. 3:1–5). A little later in the same chapter he declares, "But evil men and impostors shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." And then again he at once entreats Timothy, "But abide thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of" (II Tim. 3:13–14). The whole passage clearly shows that Paul in speaking of "the last days" was not thinking of future times but of the days then present. He and Timothy were living

in the midst of these things, and he was warning Timothy against existing dangers and was not saying or implying anything about the future. The same explanation applies to similar passages in I Tim. 4 : 1 and in II Pet. 3 : 3. John expressly says, " Little children, it is the last hour : and as ye heard that antichrist cometh, even now have there arisen many antichrists ; whereby ye know that it is the last hour " (I John 2 : 18). All these evils were then present and in the degree in which they were described by these apostles, and they were warning against them as present temptations. The Bible teaches in many passages that evil will continue in the world and that there will be a special outbreak of it at the end, but it does not teach that the world will grow worse and worse until its doom comes. The Bible is not a pessimistic book.

2. *The Bible is Optimistic.* On the other hand, the Bible is an optimistic book. In all its fundamental facts and doctrines it is full of faith and hope and cheer. It opens with the sublime declaration : " In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." No subsequent event ever broke or ever shall break this primary connection between God and this world. His sovereignty is its eternal security. No enemy shall ever pluck it out of his hand. He sitteth upon the circle of the earth and ruleth amongst the children of men. Though sin early darkened the world, yet the light of redemption also as early dawned upon it, and all through its history as sin abounded grace has much more abounded (Rom. 5 : 20).

The Old Testament is a book of hope and cheer. Through all the vicissitudes and trials and sorrows of the chosen people they kept their faith and courage up and always sang songs in the night. One of the golden texts of the Old Testament, a voice of cheer that rings through it from beginning to end, is, "Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord" (Ps. 27: 14).

The New Testament is the gospel of the grace of God in Christ and begins with the angel's song of joy at the birth of Jesus. Jesus himself was a jubilant optimist, being "anointed with the oil of gladness above thy fellows" (Heb. 1: 9), the gladdest man that ever lived. He walked through the world, then burdened and groaning with evils heavier and sorer than any we ever see, with strange serenity. The portentous problems and perils that distress us did not seem to trouble him. He saw the world in the light of God's love and he saw it not only as it was in that dark day but as it will be in the bright to-morrow. He gave his life for it, stepped out of his empty tomb, bade his disciples a hopeful and cheerful farewell, and went back to his Father that he might send his Spirit to carry on his work. Jesus Christ slipped into this world like a sunbeam through a break in the morning clouds; he was the Sunrise and the Sunburst of God.

His teachings were optimistic. He illuminated with new meaning and hope sin and salvation, the worth of the human soul, the Fatherhood of God, the brother-

hood of man, life and death, this world and the next. He left with his disciples his great commission to them, the most splendidly optimistic utterance this world has ever heard. His disciples went forth to turn this sublime faith into fact, assured that it is no visionary delusion, but that all power is given unto him and that he will be with them until the work is done.

The Bible is the supreme book of comfort in the world. It assures us that all things are working together for good to them that love God, and it opens the gates into the celestial city.

They strangely misread this book who find in it any color for a pessimistic view of the world. The Bible is bursting with light. It reveals the Light of the world, and in its light we see light.

3. *Dark Views of the World are Descriptive and not Comparative.* It is easy to depict dark pictures of the world. All one needs to do is to look at it and say what he sees. He will see frightful inequalities of poverty and wealth, terrible social injustice, human nature and society shot through with mean and malignant motives and passions, business honey-combed with fraud, politics partisan and corrupt, the social fabric soaked in intemperance and sexuality, dreadful crime and unspeakable vice, dens of iniquity that have their bottom in hell, and the whole framework of the world rocked and convulsed with war. He can pile up these evils on the planet until it seems to reel and stagger along its track as a drunken and lost world. These

descriptions may not be overdone and may be literally true. The truth is so bad that it can hardly be overstated.

And yet there is one fundamental fallacy about this view of the world: it is descriptive and not comparative; it sees the world as it is but not as it was; it forgets history. The true way of judging the world is to compare its present with its past condition and note in which direction it is moving. Is it going backward, or forward, is it getting worse, or better? It may be wrapped in gloomy twilight, but is it the twilight of the evening, or of the morning? are the shadows deepening into starless night, or are they fleeing before the rising sun?

Such a view should take a long look backward. We may not see distinct improvement in the world in a year or a decade. We cannot see the hour hand of a clock move in a single second; but if we watch it long enough we shall see it measure off the hours and sweep a full circle. The years are only seconds on the dial of time, and we must watch the clock of history for many decades and centuries to see how the world is moving. At times and points we may even note retrograde motions. There are eddies and back currents in the river, though its main stream flows onward. Evolution is attended with devolution. Humanity slips backward at times as well as marches forward. But we judge the course of the river, not by its eddies, but by its main current, and the goal of humanity, not by its slips and falls, but by its forward steps.

This comparative view saves us from pessimism and gives us an optimistic prospect. One glance at the world as it is to-day compared with what it was ten or twenty centuries ago shows us it has swept through a wide arc and is moving towards the morning. We shall see this as we proceed with our rapid survey. The pessimist fastens his eyes on the world as it is and grows alarmed and depressed; the optimist sees the world as it was and gathers hope and cheer. "Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not inquire wisely concerning this" (Eccle. 7: 10).

For I doubt not through the ages one increasing purpose runs,
And the thoughts of men are widened with the process of the suns.

4. *Material Progress.* We see at a glance how the minute hand of invention and material progress has shot forward on the clock of time. Go back ten years, and there was no airship; twenty-five years, and there was no automobile; forty years, and there was no telephone and no electric light; fifty years, no photograph; sixty years, no sewing machine, seventy-five years, no telegraph; one hundred years, no railway and no steamship; one hundred and twenty-five years, no steam-engine; two hundred years, no post office; three hundred years, no newspaper; five hundred years, no printing press; one thousand years, no compass, ships could not go out of sight of land; two thousand years, no writing paper, but parchments of skin and

tablets of wax or clay. Go back far enough and there were no plows, no tools, no iron, no cloth: people ate acorns and lived in caves and went naked or clothed themselves in the skins of wild beasts. But several things have happened since then. Those that are so fond and proud of "the good old days" do not go quite so far back. In those good old times a man hardly knew what was going on in the next county; and a journey of a hundred miles on an ox cart made him a famous traveler. Now we are citizens of the world and can go around the earth in fifty days. Then news from Europe was several months old, and the battle of New Orleans was fought after peace had been declared because the news of it had not yet arrived. Now we have placed in our hands every morning in the newspaper a photograph of the globe, or in the moving picture we have reserved seats in the amphitheater of the world and see its living scenes and look right down upon the battles that are being fought in Europe, and in the phonograph we hear voices from all over the world and can hear the explosion of shells and the cheers of the victors on distant battle fields.

We live in the golden age of invention and mastery of nature. Steam and electricity and gasoline have given us feet and hands and wings that enable us to skip over land and sea and take to the air as birds. Every year brings forth some new wonder, and the future will produce magic machines of which we have not even dreamed. The heavens are ever full of these

shooting stars, and while looking at one new wonder we are distracted by another. This material progress multiplies the necessities and comforts of life from the top to the bottom of human society. Every human being on the globe has had his life broadened and enriched by the printing-press and steam-engine. Man is hitching all his wagons to the great golden driving wheel of the sun. The hours of work are growing fewer, the work itself lighter, and the comforts and refinements of life more abundant. And thus human life on its material side is growing increasingly comfortable and enjoyable.

All this excites the scorn of pessimistic premillenarian writers. This is what Dr. Nathaniel West calls "the Christianized Beast." But even so, is not a Christianized beast better than a pagan wild beast? Such a judgment runs counter to the common sense of mankind. Dr. West himself used and enjoyed these material comforts and did all he legitimately could to get them. Such a view comes from looking at the world through the yellow glasses of pessimism. These material goods are a part of human welfare and as such they belong to the kingdom of God. "For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified through the word of God and prayer" (I Tim. 4:4–5). It is also said that these material inventions and products are just as fertile in evil as in good: there is truth in this view and this point will come up for discussion in the next section.

5. *Intellectual Progress.* Next, we look in the direction of intellectual progress and see astonishing results. Since the revival of learning in the fifteenth century the human intellect has put forth its powers as never before. A hundred sciences have been born and grown into giant power. The old childish notions of nature have been exploded and it is now viewed as one grand system of law and order. Not only has physical science leaped forward, but so also have the psychological and ethical and the political and social sciences. Every department of knowledge has been reorganized and its frontiers enormously expanded. Wonderfully is the prophecy being fulfilled, "Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased" (Dan. 12:4). And knowledge is not now, as it once was, the exclusive privilege of the few, but it is being popularized and diffused through cheap books and newspapers and common schools until it is now almost as universal and free as air. Wisdom cries in the streets. The people are reading and thinking as never before. Once the priest did this for them; and once the human brain was bound by tradition and authority. But now all such fetters are broken and the human mind is free. The sense of truth is growing finer and more exacting. We feel more the obligation to reach reality at any cost and not be governed by tradition or public opinion or partisan or personal interest. The scientific spirit of truth-seeking is more and more pervading the intellectual realm and all our life.

All this, also, marks progress in human welfare.

For knowledge is power. Science secretes civilization. Out of the soil of knowledge grows every good and beautiful thing. And knowledge has its place in the kingdom of God. All true knowledge is so much knowledge about God and helps us to know and do his will better. "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ" (John 17:3). The Bible has no affinity or sympathy with obscurantism. It bids us "give heed to reading" (I Tim. 4:13), and urges us to "prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (I Thess. 5:21). It is not afraid of the most searching investigation and the fullest and most pitiless light, and its whole spirit is a rebuke to the ignorant and cowardly suspicion of and hostility to modern learning that prevail in certain quarters. Christianity is a rational religion and grows best in the light of truth. It has always been the friend of education and the mother of schools and colleges, and of science, literature and art. Christ himself was and is "the truth" and "the light of the world." All things belong to the kingdom of God, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world (I Cor. 3:21–23), whether Plato or Newton or Darwin, Shakespeare or Milton or Tennyson, and the majestic march of modern knowledge is one highway by which it is coming into the world.

And all this, of course, excites the scorn and fury of the pessimistic premillenarian, who refuses to see any good in the very things he is striving to get and

lay up for himself and his children. Dr. West flies into italics and capital letters over modern learning. For him it is "the bestiality, proud intellectual culture, science, wealth, of Christendom, leading thousands away from, and preventing others from coming to, the knowledge of Christ." But again this is to contradict and offend common sense. This logically means that we should tear down every school house and burn every book. Such a judgment is too absurd to receive serious consideration.

But is not knowledge only a sharp and powerful tool which a bad man can use as cunningly as a good man? Has not our boasted modern science invented all these terrible engines of war that are now ripping up the earth and mining the sea and filling the air with new forms of destruction and terror? It is even so. But this is only to admit that every good thing may be abused. The loftiest and purest things are subject to the deepest abasement, and the very light that is in us may become darkness. But this is not the fault of the things themselves. The evil is not in them, but in the evil men that use them. Because men can "wrest the scriptures unto their own destruction" (II Pet. 3: 16) is no reason why we should burn the Bible as a bad book. Material and intellectual progress and products are not to be condemned as evil and branded as the very works of the devil because evil men turn them to their own evil purposes. God "hath made everything beautiful in its time" (Eccle. 3: 11), and these things belong to his kingdom in the world.

It seems strangely inconsistent for any premillenarian to depreciate and deride this progress in physical abundance and comfort and beauty in the world when he takes so great delight in the Messianic prophecies of the coming kingdom, which are clothed in such sensuous colors of fertility and prosperity. We believe these prophecies are receiving some fulfillment in our modern world and will attain fuller and richer realization in the future. God has made his world of nature beautiful, and he means that we shall make our human world beautiful also. "Behold, the days come, saith Jehovah, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine" (Amos 9: 13). Such poetic pictures prefigure prosperity and plenty; they are richly suggestive to the imagination when taken poetically, but it is little less than stupidity to take them literally and mechanically. And why should we not welcome and appreciate and enjoy these material blessings as they come to us? God is bringing about this wonderful productivity of nature, not by a cosmic convulsion, as some premillenarians fondly imagine this is to be done, but by the steam plow and self-binding reaper and by all our science and art. Some men can see wonders afar off and go into raptures over them, and be blind to them right under their eyes and in their hands.

6. *Ethical and Social Progress.* We are now striking deeper into our subject. A railway map of a continent is a grand thing to look at. The modern march

of thought is a majestic spectacle. But these are not the fundamental and vital factors in our civilization. The world might be moving rapidly along these lines and still be growing worse. The main thing in human life is character; and this is the true root and measure of progress.

There are certain great moral ideas that are now wrought into the structure of our civilization that were not there twenty or ten centuries ago. One of these is the right of human liberty. Over the whole ancient world lay the deep pall of human slavery. Egypt was black with slaves, and those vast pyramids are really built of human bones. A Roman private citizen once crucified two thousand slaves, setting their crosses up along a public highway. Ancient civilization was built on the suffering and blood of slaves, and all through ancient literature we see their terrible hardships and hear their pitiful cries. But how wide the contrast to-day. This barbarism has been almost swept from the globe and no slave now crouches beneath any civilized flag. The world has found out the natural worth of a man; and the right of every man to himself is now woven into the very texture of its civilization.

Still deeper and more powerful is the doctrine of human brotherhood. The idea was as completely unknown to the ancient world as the American continent. Then every race, nation, almost every tribe fenced itself off from others and thought of itself as of nobler descent and richer blood than they. Relics of this

barbarism still survive in the world; but these are passing. The unity of the human race involving universal brotherhood is now one of the dominant thoughts of men. God "hath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth" (Acts 17:26), was the form in which Paul shouted this truth from Mar's Hill in a city full of slaves, and "All men are created equal," was the form in which our Declaration of Independence thundered it through the modern world. This truth now underlies governments, literature, civilization. To deny it is to relapse into barbarism. The old theory of epicycles is as little likely to be revived in our astronomical observatories as the old idea that men are not of one race and common brotherhood is likely to come back into our civilization.

This fundamental idea is now working itself out into its logical application and fruits in all the fields of our modern world. It is at the bottom of our princely private and public foundations for education and philanthropy. The entire social fabric is being reconstructed under this ideal. Property rights are being subordinated to human rights. Private wealth is becoming a public trust. Society is growing sensitive on many points on which it had no ethical feeling in former times. Conscience is coming to its splendid coronation. Politics is being subjected to higher ethical standards than in former days and is growing cleaner and more honorable. Public opinion appears to be growing purer and more powerful. Business

and industrial legislation is making constant progress along ethical lines. A great body of legislation is growing up regulating railways, monopolies and trusts, child labor, the labor of women, the hours of labor, protection from dangerous machinery and unsanitary conditions, compensation for injuries, and related matters, all of which mark and measure progress in the social conscience. The liquor traffic is on its last legs and will presently be an outlaw in our modern world. The rich are growing richer, but the poor are not growing poorer; rather their economic level is steadily rising. Not only have public and private charities and philanthropies enormously multiplied, but social justice is in the air and more and more will it make itself felt in our legislation and life.

Broader and more hopeful still, there is developing a world consciousness and a world conscience. The world, once broken into dissevered and warring fragments, is now growing into unity. Commerce is a powerful world unifier. Railways spin steel threads that bind it together, and all the ships on the seven seas are so many shuttles thrown from shore to shore to weave it into one web. The earth has virtually grown a hundred times smaller in the last hundred years and has become a quite manageable and handy little planet. We can now flash our thought around it in a few minutes and will presently be flying around it. All nations now are neighbors. This conduces powerfully to community of thought and life. Great ideas are now rapidly diffused around the world. The "West" and

the "East" are meeting and mixing, in spite of the poet. It is impossible that antagonistic ideas and ideals should permanently dominate and divide the Occident and the Orient.

The world is developing a world supreme court of international law in which its ethical sense will find expression and steadily move up the scale of moral right and obligation. "The Hague Tribunal," however feeble and even futile it may have proven as a world force, was and is a bud that will yet burst into a glorious flower, like an early spring blossom creeping up through the winter snow. The common sense of the world is bound to end the waste and wickedness of war and to organize the world as a business concern on the basis of mutual justice and profit and prosperity. Humanity is beginning to realize its brotherhood and to speak on international questions with a majestic voice. It is slowly but surely marching towards "the Parliament of man, the Federation of the world." The great war has given a powerful impulse to this movement and is hastening its consummation.

This process of moralizing and socializing the world is only begun and no one would claim it is very far advanced; it would be easy to smear dark colors over this picture; but the process is moving in the right direction, which is the main thing, and is a bud that is beginning to open its petals and to give us a hint of what will be its flower and its fruit. The measure of this moral and social progress and the signs of its fuller coming are written out in innumerable volumes which

may be read by those that wish to know and have eyes to see. Dr. James S. Dennis's monumental work on *Christian Missions and Social Progress* and Dr. Richard S. Storrs's masterly and eloquent volume on *The Divine Origin of Christianity as Indicated by Its Historical Effects* may be mentioned as illustrations of this literature. The modern ethical and social world contains many of these stars of progress that pierce its night and herald the morning.

All this is the coming of Jesus Christ into the world and the development of his kingdom. We must get rid of the narrow notion that Christ is present and working only in the church and is speaking only when a minister is preaching the gospel or expounding theology in the pulpit. Some people can see religion only when it is in some official place and is officially labeled and can see God only in a church. Christ is in the church in a special sense, but he is also out in the world and is "the true light which lighteth every man, coming into the world" (John 1:9). The Spirit of God and of a Christ is immanent in the world and is working through all channels to pour his grace into men's minds and hearts and incorporate it in the social organism. The doctrine of Christ's immanence is immensely more important and fruitful for us than the doctrine of his imminence. The present Christ is of more worth and power to us than the coming Christ, though these two aspects of his presence and power are not to be separated. Christ is now in the world, and in his Spirit he never left it. He is working in

politics and business, in the political party and the labor union, in the press in newspaper, magazine and book. He sits in the chancellories of empires and republics. God's law and love are active in all the operations of nature and are striving to pervade and control, bless and beautify all human relations. The kingdom of God is his rule in human hearts and wills, and it is his will that men should realize their brotherhood and love every man his neighbor as himself.

Many premillenarians do not see this and they deny it. They even scoff at this ethical and social progress as only a superficial taming of "the Christianized Beast." But while looking for the coming of Christ in a future kingdom to be instituted by violence as an earthly empire they are blind to the coming of Christ "in this present world" (Tit. 2: 12), which is as certainly under the law and love of God as any other world. We daily pray, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6: 10), and we rejoice that in this ethical and social progress God's will is being done more and more on earth.

The new age stands as yet
Half built against the sky,
Open to every threat
Of storms that clamor by:
Scaffolding veils the walls,
And dim dust floats and falls,
As moving to and fro, their tasks the masons ply.
— *William Watson.*

7. *Religious Progress.* All progress in good is re-

ligious, but there are points in progress which we view as distinctively religious. The church is not a stagnant and obsolete institution, but is moving with the current. It has granted or gained the right of private judgment in religion. Only a few generations ago our fathers were burning heretics. If a man did not agree with the ecclesiastical authorities the short argument with him was, Off with his head. A man seemed to be so completely answered and silenced when his head was off. But in time ecclesiastics discovered to their dismay that a heretic was not hushed when his head was off, and now we all have liberty which was purchased with a great price.

Next, the Bible and the whole subject of religion is being better understood. So vast and complex a book as the Bible is not to be mastered in a generation or a century, and modern scholarship has greatly illuminated it and deduced its true teaching and spirit. Religion has become less ritualistic and mechanical and more spiritual and vital. The central thought of Christianity now is Christ himself. His kingdom is being understood as the rule of his Spirit in the hearts and lives of men, a Christianized brotherhood. Sectarian bigotry and bitterness are largely giving way to common fellowship and service. The day has gone by when Presbyterians think that God is a Presbyterian or when Episcopalians think that he wears a white gown. Doctrine has not been displaced or depreciated, but it is now translated into duty and service. The emphasis is now put on the social gospel, and the kingdom of

God overshadows all our divisive creeds and denominational churches as the Alps overshadow their ravines and valleys. The individual church that is a select social club of congenial people and nurses itself in comfort is passing and will soon no longer be respectable.

The Christian church, while still "looking for that blessed hope," is not standing gazing into the heavenly city, but it is building a copy of that city down on this earth. Even now it is rearing its jeweled gates around our horizon and laying its golden pavements right under our feet. This is the meaning of all its worship and work, preaching, education, schools and hospitals, ethical progress, social service, missions home and foreign. It is quitting the business of saving itself and is beginning to save the world. It is unifying its forces at home that it may set out on its grand world march. Already it has penetrated every continent and planted itself on every island and flung its outposts around the equator and from pole to pole. It is now the greatest organization on earth, the one world enterprise. And it has results to show that are not unpromising. In our own country Christianity has grown at least five times faster than the population. One hundred years ago there was one professing Christian in every fifteen of the population, and now there is one in every three, and, excluding children, one in every two. In the world at large the results are astonishing. In 1500 A. D. there were 100,000,000 nominal Christians in the world; in 1800 there were

200,000,000, and the latest statistics show that, out of a total world population of 1,646,491,000, there are now 564,510,000 nominal Christians,[1] or about one-third of the population of the globe. Christianity has grown more in the last one hundred years than in the preceding eighteen hundred. What a striking commentary on the bold prediction of Voltaire, uttered in 1760, "Ere the beginning of the nineteenth century Christianity will have disappeared from the earth."

One of the most painful if not shameful things in not a few premillenarian writers is the way they depreciate if not defile the Christian church. West and Wimberly are illustrative writers on this point. "The professing Christian church," says West, quoting another author whom he approves, "becomes *Babylon, (Confusion)* the Harlot being not merely the City of Rome, nor the Roman Church alone, but all Churches in Christendom, without the Spirit and Life of our Lord Jesus, apostate from moral righteousness, corrupt, lifeless, worldly, seeking the pleasures of the flesh, open to the influence of all false spirits and false teachers, having a name to live, yet governed by the spirit, maxims, policies, and principles, of nature and the world."[2] "The church has not quit doing business," says Wimberly, "but it has ceased to fight — it is no

[1] *Whittier's Almanac*, London, 1917. According to the same authority the Confucianists and Taoists number 300,830,000, the Mohammedans 221,825,000, the Hindus 210,540,000, the Animists 158,270,000, the Buddhists 138,031,000, the Shintoists 25,000,000, the Jews 12,205,000, unclassified 15,280,000.

[2] *The Thousand Years*, p. 442.

longer militant." [3] Such writers berate the church for being "no longer militant" because militancy is the only kind of might they know. They believe in the conversion of the world by violence and convulsion. They seem at times to delight in dragging the skirts of the church in the mire and even give the impression that they would be disappointed if they found any good in it. They make it out as bad as they can so that it will fit into their theory that the gospel cannot convert the world and that a cosmic catastrophe must come to save the church and destroy the ungodly world.

Now the Christian church is not yet wholly Christian and has spots and stains enough on its robes to satisfy the most envious or venomous critic. But neither was the church wholly Christian in the beginning when the Spirit was poured out upon it in Pentecostal power, and when Jesus himself had gathered only twelve disciples one of them was a mercenary traitor. Nevertheless, Christ loved the church and gave himself for it, and we should love it too with a jealous love. He loves it still, and only the most jaundiced eye or prejudiced theory can magnify its faults and minimize its virtues. The church has in it the Spirit of Christ, and to-day it is better, more Christ-like in spirit and service and self-sacrifice, than it ever was in the past. It is the human channel to which Christ committed his gospel which is the power of God unto salvation. And on an ever larger scale and in greater efficiency is it carrying out the great

[3] *Behold the Morning!* p. 40.

commission as it is making disciples of all nations. Its frictional and wasteful divisions are being healed, and it is beginning to march "like a mighty army." Take the church out of the world, and the Light of the world would be lost, and its salt would lose its savor. The church is more Christian to-day than it ever was before, and this better church is making a better world.

8. *The World War and the Better World.* During the course of this reasoning some of our readers may have been impatiently thinking, Does not this world war contradict and destroy this entire argument that the world is growing better? Is it not wrecking the whole framework of our civilization and showing that our boasted Christianity is a failure? Some premillenarians are saying this very thing. Some of them appear to derive satisfaction from it as confirming their doctrine. They are already busy with their pencils and prophetic numbers figuring out its meaning and outcome; and they easily conclude that it means the hopeless failure of our civilization and the inadequacy of the gospel to convert the world.

This is not the place and we do not have the space to say much on this subject.[4] But we make bold to say this: This war, on the part of the Allies and outside of the German wickedness which plotted and

[4] As these pages are passing through the press the Great War has ended (November 11, 1918) with the practical surrender of Germany and the total collapse of German autocracy. This epochal event, while calling for slight verbal changes at various points in the text, only confirms the general teaching of this book with respect to the war.

planned and caused and started it and must bear its full guilt and final penalty, as "a sin against the Holy Ghost," as the German high official, Lichnowsky, pronounced it, is the most Christian thing that has happened on this earth in the last four hundred years. We must go back to the Reformation to find its like in principle and spirit. It has the same root as the Reformation, and that is why the Vatican does not like it and is secretly opposing the Allies all it dare. It is a war wholly in defense of natural right and righteousness and against brute despotism. As the Reformation shattered ecclesiastical autocracy, so is this war to be the destruction of military autocracy. For the last time, we believe, a despotic military empire is lifting its horrid head over the world. Alexander, Cæsar, Charlemagne, Napoleon — the Kaiser is the last of this line. This war on the part of the European Allies is absolutely just and necessary, and on the part of our own country it is the most unselfish and noblest war of history. It is the Declaration of Independence extended to the whole world. It is the Gettysburg Address uttered again in the amphitheater of the world in which we with our Allies "highly resolve" to pay the "last full measure of our devotion" that "government of the people, by the people and for the people shall not perish from the earth." It is a war of democracy against autocracy. It is therefore the cause of God. And hence it is opening the way for the kingdom of God in the world. Have we not seen that this kingdom is democratic?

This war, colossal and terrible as it is beyond anything the world has ever seen in all the centuries of the past, is a work of general destruction that is preparing the way for a general reconstruction of the world, political, social, industrial, educational and religious. It is a monstrous volcano that is pouring out molten lava of fire and blood that will presently cool and crumble into rich soil that will spring up in fine flowers and mellow fruit. Already a new spirit is in the air. The world even amidst its gigantic struggle and while nailed upon its cross is finding its soul and is peering into the future with the keenest expectation of better things to come. This war is forcing us to look at things in their hard and naked reality, and to reconstruct our standards and revalue our worths. It has let loose a spirit that will spare nothing, however old and consecrated it may be, but is bound to shape all things new. This is another eagle that will never go back into its old shell. The old world is willing to pay the price of the new world. The blood of this generation, so freely and lavishly shed, will be the blessing of the next. Out of all this storm and fire and wreck will arise a new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth social righteousness. Already yesterday seems far away, and we are well on in the night towards the new to-morrow. "Thro' the shadow of the globe we sweep into the younger day." God is ever abroad in his world, saying, "Behold, I make all things new" (Rev. 21 : 5).

This does not in the least excuse the unspeakable

wickedness and guilt of the war on the part of those who caused it, but it shows how God brings good out of evil. "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain" (Ps. 76: 10).

As for the charge that Christianity is a failure, Christianity has not failed, but some professing Christians have. Germany's materialistic, militaristic philosophy, taught in its universities and pulpits and in the councils of its generals and statesmen and shouted from its very housetops, has failed terribly and tragically. Christianity in this war is showing that it has a sword and can fight in a righteous cause. For Jesus himself, who was no pacifist in the recent sense of the term, said, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's" (Matt. 22: 21), and among the things that are Caesar's are his soldiers with their swords. Not only so, but Jesus paid taxes to help hire Caesar's soldiers and to buy their swords. On one occasion Jesus said to his disciples, Sell your coat and get a sword! And again he said, "Think not that I came to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword" (Matt. 10: 34). He himself once "made a scourge of small cords" and drove the thieves and robbers out of the temple: just what we are doing in Belgium and France to-day. Whatever this "scourge" was it was an instrument of force and represented the policeman's mace and the soldier's gun. Some people seem never to have seen such passages in, or to have expunged them from, their Bibles. But truer prophecies he never

uttered, and they have been abundantly fulfilled. For wherever Jesus Christ has gone there has been a fight: a fight against slavery, against the degradation of woman, against the liquor traffic, against ecclesiastical despotism, and now the greatest Armageddon of all against military despotism. Jesus Christ fought our Civil War, as the event proved, and he is now fighting in the fields of France for the cause of his kingdom. The true representatives of Christ and the Christian church over in France and Italy are not the chaplains and Y. M. C. A. and Red Cross only or mainly, but the armies of the Allies. They are doing just what he commanded them when he told his disciples to get a sword, and they are fulfilling his prophecy that he came to send a sword. The sword is an instrument of the Prince of Peace when it is wielded in defense of justice and liberty. There are times when the sword of the Spirit and the sword of steel, the Bible and the bayonet, go together and do the same work. After this war, Christianity will have a freer field and the world will be rebuilt along Christian lines of justice and truth, righteousness and peace. The sword in this war, we trust, will go far toward ending the work of the sword, and then all the visions and dreams of prophets and poets will be fulfilled when "the battle-flags are furled" in "the Federation of the world" and nations shall "beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Isaiah 2:4).

MORNING

(Lines found on the body of an Australian soldier.)

Ye that have faith to look with fearless eyes
Beyond the tragedy of a world at strife,
And know that out of death and night shall rise
The dawn of ampler life:
Rejoice, whatever anguish rend the heart,
That God has given you the priceless dower
To live in these great times, and have your part
In Freedom's crowning hour;
That ye may tell your sons who see the light
High in the heavens — their heritage to take —
"I saw the powers of darkness take their flight;
I saw the morning break."

9. *The Evolution of the Ages.* The method of comparison thus dispels pessimism and gives us a better world. We derive the same result from the root principle of the world. The kingdom of God, we have seen, is a growth, and human history is an evolution. Each generation does not begin the world's work anew, but takes it up at the point where the preceding generation left off. Any improvement, progress, once made, is built into the structure of the world and never after is really lost. The Hebrew idea of religion, the Greek idea of beauty, the Roman idea of law, and the Saxon idea of liberty, are wrought into the very texture of our civilization. The Reformation established a principle for all time. Every battlefield, whether of the Marne or Marathon, has yielded us a victory. All the science, literature and art of the past are heaped up for us as our inheritance. We stand on the top of the ages with all their accumulated wealth under our

feet. The world's progress is a river into which every nation and every generation pours a tributary stream. It is a growing tree: every century adds a ring. All growth is from root to fruit. First comes the root, knotted, hard and ugly, hidden in the ground; then come the trunk and branches; then leaves and blossoms and the tree blazes with color; finally the ripe luscious fruit. The primitive ages were the root out of which human history has grown. Later ages are the trunk and branches. Leaves and buds are just beginning to appear. By and by this mighty tree will blossom as the rose and drop its fruitage on every land. And thus under the guidance and uplift of the Spirit of God the world moves forward and grows upward.

Of course in this general progress there have been points and periods of retrogression. Evolution sometimes results in degeneration. The battle line of humanity does not move across the field with equal step and unbroken front. Here and there it wavers, halts, breaks. At times the whole line seems driven back in confusion, as in the Dark Ages. But this retreat is only in order to reform and move on towards victory. The vast evils and unspeakable wrongs of the world do not disprove this progress; rather it is often progress that brings these evils to light and makes us sensible of them.[5] We have faith that nothing can

[5] "It is not by accident, then, that the social question is most conspicuous in the most prosperous and best educated countries. It is one expression of prosperity and education. There is no social question in Turkey and Egypt." Peabody, *Jesus Christ and the Social Question*, p. 11.

stop this forward sweep of the gulf current of the ages. The hour hand of history can never be turned back. The oak cannot be crushed back into the acorn. Omnipotence is in this movement. The constellations are marching behind it. God is in his heaven, and all will yet be right with his world.

The world, as we have seen, is yet young. The very planet is still in the workshop and will not be finished for millions of years. Humanity is in its infancy. The centuries stretch out before it in vast vistas. There is before it a prospect of hope and splendid optimism. The future is rosy with morning light. Nothing has been done that shall not be better done. Every human achievement shall be infinitely surpassed. Truth shall be taken from the scaffold, and wrong driven from the throne. More and more shall He whose right it is reign and the will of God be done on earth as it is in heaven. This will be the millennium. The visions of the Hebrew prophets of the Messianic kingdom shall be fulfilled in their true spiritual and glorious meaning. Uninspired prophets have caught the same vision. John Fiske, theistic evolutionist, saw it when he wrote: "The future is lighted for us with the radiant colors of hope. Strife and sorrow shall disappear. Peace and love shall reign supreme. The dream of poets, the lesson of priest and prophet, the inspiration of the great musician, is confirmed in the light of modern knowledge; and as we gird ourselves for the work of life we may look forward to the time when in the truest sense the kingdoms of this world

shall become the kingdom of Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever, King of kings, and Lord of lords." And Browning, the profoundly Christian and optimistic poet of our age, struck the same triumphant note and grand chord:

> For these things tend still upward, progress is
> The law of life, man is not man as yet.
> Nor shall I deem his object served, his end
> Attained, his genuine strength put fairly forth,
> While only here and there a star dispels
> The darkness, here and there a towering mind
> O'erlooks its prostrate fellows; when the host
> Is out at once to the despair of night,
> When all mankind alike is perfected,
> Equal in full-blown powers — then, not till then,
> I say, begins man's general infancy.

10. *The Blessed Hope.* "Then cometh the end." This world is not our home. Transitoriness is stamped on all things human and earthly.

The earth itself will end. It is not a stable planet, much less an eternal world. The seeds of decay and dissolution are planted in its very constitution; its doom was on it from the beginning. How it will end science is not sure. It may freeze to death and float around the sun as a planetary corpse, like the moon, coffined, it may be, in ice and wrapped in a shroud of snow. It may be drawn in a slowly winding spiral towards the sun, as Sir George Darwin calculated and predicted, and finally plunge into its fiery depths, the mother sun devouring her earth child. Or it may be blotted out suddenly by some colossal

cosmic collision. God is constantly creating and extinguishing worlds, as snowflakes are constantly forming and melting in the air.

Humanity will end. The premillenarian theory of an eternal succession of human generations of flesh and blood on this earth is a visionary, wild idea, negatived alike by Scripture and science. And we may be thankful that humanity will end. For it will never be perfected on this earth. Evil will cling to it to the end. The tares are too deeply intertwined with the wheat ever to be wholly rooted up. This world, however it may attain to the dreams of prophets and poets, will always have some evil mixed with its good. It will be a not wholly extinct volcano, however its slopes and top may be sunny and green and fruitful. It may slumber long ages, and then blow up in a cataclysmic explosion. The devil is to be loosed " for a little time " at the end of his imprisonment (Rev. 20: 1–3).

And at its best this world is not our home. It satisfies the bee and bird and beast, but not our immortal spirits with their ever expanding, infinite capacities and longings. Man is smitten with incurable unrest in this world and cries out, with Augustine, " O God, thou hast made us for thyself, and we cannot rest until we rest in thee."

All this points to the end. And the end is the final coming of Christ. At his first coming he began the work of his redemption of this world, and at his second coming he will complete it. When he will come, how he will come, we do not know. We know that he will

come at the right time when this world has run its course and its work is done. And we know he will come in the right way so as to end this world with a worthy wind-up. This world demands judgment, and it will get it. The saints of God are to receive rewards, and they will get them. The glory of Christ is to be manifested, and he shall not fail of his crown. Heaven is to be ushered in as the eternal state, and God is to be all in all. All this calls for appropriate manifestation. God's ways with men are to receive public and final vindication. The last act in the drama of this world, we would fain believe, will be staged and its curtain rung down in a grand amphitheater with fitting scenic symbols and splendors. But "flesh and blood" will not appear on that stage. It will move in another realm. The figurative language of the Scriptures is a symbolic suggestion to our imagination of this coming end. The reality will far surpass our poor power to conceive it, and material images, when taken literally, only degrade it. Then all the visions of the prophets shall receive their highest and final fulfillment. Then the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness and sorrow and sighing shall flee away (Isa. 35: 10). Then shall we be like them that dream, and our mouth shall be filled with laughter and our tongue with singing (Ps. 126: 1–2).

This is the blessed hope. It completes and crowns this earthly life. This world, that has been one age-

long battle and has been burdened with sorrows and drenched with blood and tears, "crowned with attributes of woe like glories," is worth while in view of this grand consummation. Crowned with this hope, it "means intensely, and means good." "Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (I John 4:2). This is our final faith in God:

That God, which ever lives and loves,
One God, one law, one element,
And one far-off divine event,
To which the whole creation moves.

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